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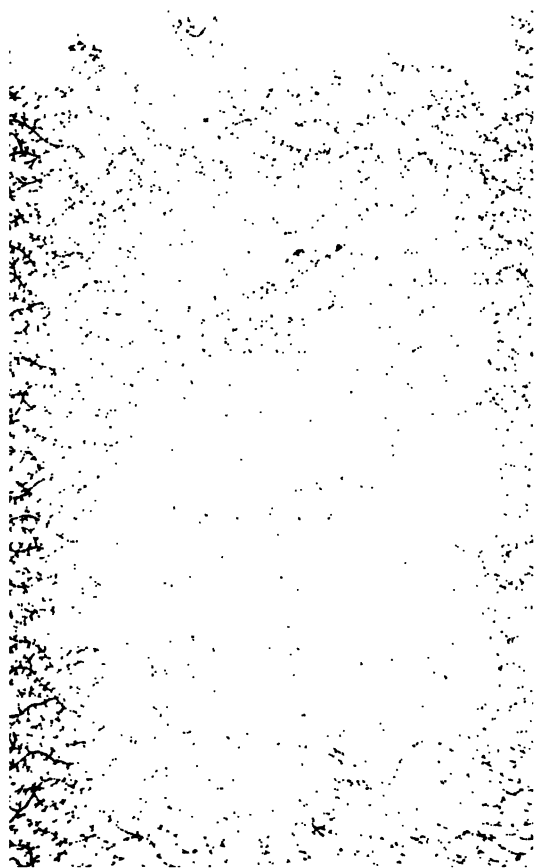


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James Lenox

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THE
BRITISH PROSE WRITERS.

VOL. XXIII.

BURNS'S LETTERS.

NEW YORK:
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1819—21.



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LETTERS OF BURNS.

VOL. I.



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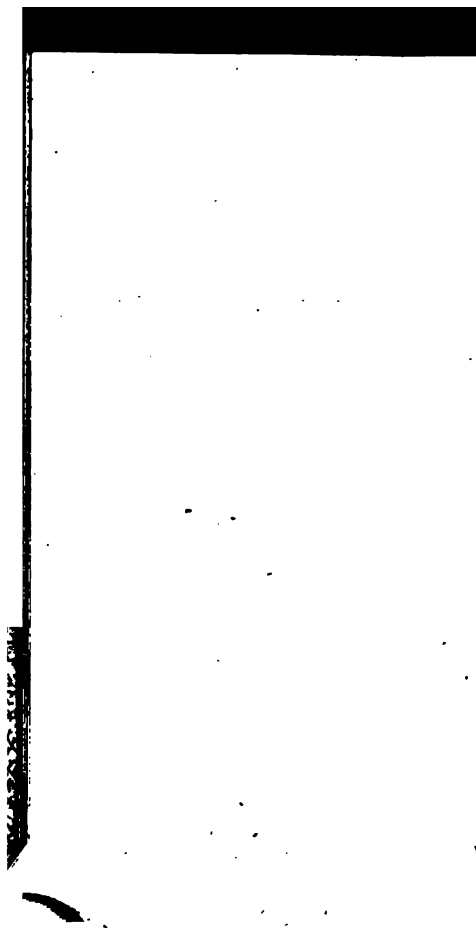
LONDON. PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHARPE, PICCADILLY.

1819.



2023-2024
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THE Poetry of BURNS has had such an extensive circulation as to occasion no little surprise that the LETTERS of the Bard could not hitherto be procured without the re-purchase of the poetical volumes, already in the hands of the greater part of his readers; some accommodation, it is presumed, that part of his readers will acknowledge, from the publication of the present volumes. It is not necessary to repeat the biography of the Poet in this place : it has not only been condensed from Dr. Currie's Memoirs, and prefixed to all the later editions of his Poems, but is told by Burns himself in the twenty-sixth Number of this edition, so as to leave nothing to be wished for in a classical edition of his " LETTERS."



LETTERS
OF
ROBERT BURNS.

I.

TO HIS FATHER.

Irvine, Dec. 27, 1781.

HONOURED SIR,

I HAVE purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's day: but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder; and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast, produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I glimmer a little into futurity;

but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long, very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

“ The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.”

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations,* than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me: I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to

* “ 15. Therefore are they before the thrones of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

“ 16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

“ 17. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and with wishing you a merry New-year's-day, I shall conclude.

I am, honoured sir,

Your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNS.

P. S. My meal is nearly out; but I am going to borrow, till I get more.

II.

TO MR. JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOLMASTER,
Staples Inn Buildings, London.

Lochlee, 15th January, 1783.

DEAR SIR,

As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter, without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept

pretty clear of vicious habits; and, in this respect, I hope my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought, that bred as I have been, under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but, to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any thing original about him which shows me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to "study men, their manners, and their ways;" and for this darling subject, I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to any thing further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched does not much terrify me: I know that even then my talent for what country-folks call "a sensible crack," when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehensions about that; for, though indolent, yet, so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy; and in many things, especially in tavern-matters, I am a strict economist; not indeed for the sake of the money, but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living;

above every thing, I abhor, as hell, the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as *Shenstone*, particularly his *Elegies*; *Thomson*; *Man of Feeling*, a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World*; *Sterne*, especially his *Sentimental Journey*; *M'Pherson's Ossian*, &c. These are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct; and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race—he “who can soar above this little scene of things,” can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves? O how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and “catching the manners living as they rise,” whilst the men of business jostle me on every side as an idle encumbrance in their way. But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere commonplace story, but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept the same for yourself from,

Dear sir, yours, &c.

BURNS'S LETTERS.

III.

*The following is taken from the MS. Prose presented
by our Bard to Mr. Riddel.]*

On rummaging over some old papers, I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out, as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope that, some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It set off thus:

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c.
by R. B.—a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good will to every creature, rational and irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinged with an unpolished rustic way of life; but as I believe are really his *own*, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature, to see a ploughman think and feel, under the influence of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the various *modes and manners of life*, however diversified alike, I believe, on all the species.

“There are numbers in the world that want sense to make a figure, so much &c.”

of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print." *Shenstone.*

"Pleasing, when youth has long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil, or our pen design'd!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind." *Ibid.*

April, 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into, still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed on it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen, in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

August.

There is certainly some connexion between love, and music, and poetry; and therefore, I have always thought a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love-composition:

"As toward her cot he jogg'd along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet, till I got once heartily in love; and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart.

September.

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher,

BURNS'S LETTERS.

Mr. Smith, in his excellent *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies or crimes have made us miserable and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.
In every other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say—"It was no deed of mine;"
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—"Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worse far, the pangs of keen remorse;
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us—
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell in all thy store of torments,
There's not a keener lash
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace!
O, happy! happy! enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

March, 178

I have often observed, in the course of my
experience of human life, that every man, ev

worst, has something good about him ; though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called *wicked*. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening ; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation ; and, what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all—I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of *blackguards*, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character ; those who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes “ stained with guilt, * * * * *,” I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have

various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are, in a manner, *peculiar* to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This I believe may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

“Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth,”—

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, “walks on the wings of the wind.” In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:

The wintry west extends his blast, &c.

See Poems.

Shenstone finely observes, that love-verses, writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been *along a miserable dupe* to love, and have been

into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, genuine from the heart.

Behind yon hills, &c.

See Songs.

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry*; though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The *grave* I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The *merry* are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads, who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action; but, without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular *he*, who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others: and lastly, to grace the quorum, such as are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that *Being* to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that can render life delightful; and to maintain an integrative conduct towards our fellow-creatures; that so, by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave; I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of any son of poverty and obscurity, are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the, even lawful, bustling and straining after the world's riches and honours; and I do not see but that he may gain Heaven as well (which, by the bye, is no mean consideration), who steals through the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way; as he who, straining straight forward, and perhaps bespattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences; where, after all, he can only see and be seen a little more conspicuously, than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor indolent devil he has left behind him.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect, that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how

mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now "buried among the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he too has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

This is all worth quoting in my MSS. and more than all.

R. B.

IV.

TO MR. AIKEN.

Ayrshire, 1786.

SIR,

I WAS with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After

I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the *first and readiest*, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen : he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper : but this you know is out of my power, so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer ! an epocha, which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to show my gratitude to Mr. Ballantyne, by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*. I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable, in a very long life, of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations ; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection, but sheerly the instinctive emotion of a heart too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it : the uncertainty of getting soon into business, the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home ; and, besides, *I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness*, from causes which you pretty well

know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad; and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it.

* * * * *

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet I think I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stunted bourn of our present existence; if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocence of helpless infancy? O thou great, unknown Power! thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!

* * * * *

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen *something of the storm of mischief thickening over*

my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power in that way to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or, enjoying it, only threaten to entail farther misery —

* * * * *

To tell the truth, I have little reason for complaint, as the world, in general, has been kind to me, fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast) still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the *hallachores* of the human race), were striking off with eager hope and earnest intention some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was "*standing idle in the market-place,*" or only let

chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim.

* * * * *

You see, sir, that if to *know* one's errors were a probability of *mending* them, I stand a fair chance; but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.*

* * * * *

V.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

Ayrshire, 1786.

MADAM,

I AM truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause, as the sons of Parnassus; nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honour him with their approbation. Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than by noticing my attempts to celebrate our illustrious ancestor, the *Saviour of his Country*.

* This letter was evidently written under the distress of mind occasioned by our Poet's separation from Mrs. Burns.

" Great patriot-hero ! ill-requited chief ! "

The first book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was *The Life of Hannibal*; the next was *The History of Sir William Wallace*: for several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember in particular being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

" Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat."

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto: and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymers) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.

VI.

TO MRS. STEWART, OF STAIR.

1786.

MADAM,

'THE hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promise soon as I intended. I have here sent you a p—

songs, &c. which never made their appearance except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you; but of that I am far from being an adequate judge. The song to the tune of *Ettrick Banks*, you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think myself it has some merit, both as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening, and one of the finest pieces of Nature's workmanship, the finest, indeed, we know any thing of, an amiable, beautiful young woman; * but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, Madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connexions in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers: and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember—the reception I got when I had the honour of waiting on you at Stair.

* Miss A * * * .

I am little acquainted with politeness ; but a good deal of benevolence of temper and of heart. Surely, did those in exalted station how happy they could make some classes inferiors by condescension and affability, they never stand so high, measuring out with the height of their elevation, but conduct sweetly as did Mrs. Stewart of Stair.*

VII.

TO MISS . . .

Mossgiel, 18th N

MADAM,

POETS are such outré beings, so much the more of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a latitude in the laws of propriety, than the rest of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless poet has taken with you in the enclosed poem, which begs leave to present you with. Whether it has any poetical merit any way worthy of the attention of the proper judge ; but it is the best I can produce ; and, what to a good heart may perhaps be a superior grace, it is equally fervent.

The scenery was nearly taken from the picture, though I dare say, Madam, you do not re-

* The song enclosed is that beginning—

'Twas e'en—the dewy fields were green,

as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *revoir* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf.—It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property nature gives you, your dearest comfort, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely-browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene—and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of Nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or met a poet's eye; those visionary bards excepted who hold commerce with ærial beings! Had Calumny and Villany taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain, dull, historic prose into *metaphor* and measure.

The enclosed song* was the work of my return home; and perhaps it but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene.

* * * * *

I have the honour to be, Madam,
Your most obedient,
and very humble servant,
ROBERT BURNS.

VIII.

In the name of the NINE. Amen.

WE, ROBERT BURNS, by virtue of a Warrant from NATURE, bearing date the Twenty-fifth day of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine,† POET-LAUREAT and BARD IN CHIEF in and over the Districts and Countries of KYLE CUNNINGHAM, and CARRICK, of old extent, To our trusty and well-beloved WILLIAM CHALMERS and JOHN M'ADAM, Students and Practitioners in the ancient and mysterious Science of CONFOUNDING RIGHT and WRONG.

RIGHT TRUSTY,

BE it known unto you, That whereas, in the course of our care and watchings over the Order and Police of all and sundry the MANUFACTURERS, RETAINERS and VENDERS OF POESY; Bards, Poets, Poetasters, Rhymers, Jingers, Songsters, Ballad-singers, &c. &c. &c. &c. male and female — We have disco-

* 'Twas even — the dewy fields were green.

See Songs.

† His birth-day.

vered a certain * * *, nefarious, abominable, and wicked SONG, or BALLAD, a copy whereof We have here enclosed ; OUR WILL THEREFORE IS, that YE pitch upon and appoint the most execrable individual of that most execrable species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nickname, of THE DEIL'S YELL NOWTE ;* and, after having caused him to kindle a fire at the CROSS OF AYR, ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch's merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked Song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to all such COMPOSITIONS and COMPOSERS. And this in no wise leave ye undone, but have it executed in every point as this OUR MANDATE bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when IN PERSON We hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

GIVEN AT MAUCHLINE, this twentieth day of Növenber, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.†

GOD SAVE THE BARD !

IX.

TO MR. CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, 27th Dec. 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,
I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner ; but of all men

* Old bachelors.

† Enclosed was the ballad, probably *Holy Willie's Prayer*.

living, I had intended to send you an entertaining letter ; and by all the plodding stupid powers that in nodding conceited majesty preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily solemn oath this! I am, and have been ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour as to write a commentary on the *Revelations*.

* * * * *

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I passed Glenbuck. One blank in the address to Edinburgh, “ Fair B****,” is the heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been any thing nearly like her, in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed, since Milton’s Eve on the first day of her existence.

I have sent you a parcel of subscription-bills ; and have written to Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Aiken, to call on you for some of them, if they want them. My direction is—Care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge-street.

X.

TO THE EARL OF EGLINTON.

Edinburgh, January, 1787.

MY LORD,

As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen of the

world; but have all those national prejudices which I believe grow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotchman. There is scarcely any thing to which I am so feelingly alive, as the honour and welfare of my country; and, as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine, to be distinguished: though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy, then, to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr. Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks; but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of; and mercenary servility I trust I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest.

XI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 15th January, 1787.

MADAM,
Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honoured with, is a deep reproach to me for un-

grateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib: I wished to have written to Dr. Moore before I wrote to you; but though, every day since I received yours of Dec. 30th, the idea, the wish to write to him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of "the sons of little men." To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners* a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of lord Eglinton, with ten guineas, by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honour me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition.

* Stanzas in the *Vision*, beginning "By stately tower or palace fair," and ending with the first Duan.

You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my *Vision* long ago, I had attempted a description of Koyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the *Saviour of his Country*, which, sooner or later, I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserved some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely, feelingly certain my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and, however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion.

in silent resolve, with all the tenacious perty. I mention this to you, once to burden my mind, and I do not wish to more about it.—But

“ When proud fortune's ebbing tide n
you will bear me witness, that, when fame was at the highest, I stood, with the inebriating cup in my hand, ward with rueful resolve to the ha when the blow of Calumny should da ground, with all the eagerness of triumph.

* * * * *

Your patronising me, and interest in my fame and character as a poet, I re exalts me in my own idea ; and whether cannot aid me in my subscription is a paltry subscription-bill any charms to a bard, compared with the patronage of ant of the immortal Wallace ?

XII.

TO DR. MOORE.

SIR,
Mrs. Dunlop has been so kind as to-tracts of letters she has had from you do the rustic bard the honour of notice his works. Those who have felt the solicitudes of authorship, can only know sure it gives to be noticed in such

ages of the first character. Your criticisms, sir, receive with reverence; only, I am sorry they mostly came too late: a peccant passage or two, that I would certainly have altered, were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had; and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear—where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttelton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.

XIII.

TO THE REVEREND G. LOWRIE, OF NEWMILLS

Near Kilmarnock.

Edinburgh, 5th February, 1787.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

WHEN I look at the date of your kind letter, my heart reproaches me severely with ingratitude in neglecting so long to answer it. I will not trouble you with any account, by way of apology, of my hurried life and distracted attention: do me the justice to believe that my delay by no means proceeded from want of respect. I feel, and ever shall feel, for you, the mingled sentiments of esteem for a friend, and reverence for a father.

I thank you, sir, with all my soul, for your friendly hints; though I do not need them so much as my friends are apt to imagine. You are dazzled with newspaper-accounts and distant reports; but in reality, I have no great temptation to be intoxicated with the cup of prosperity. Novelty may attract the attention of mankind a while; to it I owe my present eclat; but I see the time not far distant, when the popular tide, which has borne me to a height of which I am, perhaps, unworthy, shall recede with silent celerity, and leave me a barren waste of sand, to descend at my leisure to my former station. I do not say this in the affectation of modesty; I see the consequence is unavoidable, and am prepared for it. I had been at a good deal of pains to form a just, impartial estimate of my

tellectual powers before I came here ; I have not added, since I came to Edinburgh, any thing to the account ; and I trust I shall take every atom of it back to my shades, the coverts of my unnoticed, early years.

In Dr. Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found, what I would have expected in our friend, a clear head and an excellent heart.

By far the most agreeable hours I spend in Edinburgh must be placed to the account of Miss Lowrie and her piano fort  . I cannot help repeating to you and Mrs. Lowrie a compliment that Mr. Mackenzie, the celebrated "Man of Feeling," paid to Miss Lowrie, the other night, at the concert. I had come in at the interlude, and sat down by him, till I saw Miss Lowrie in a seat not very distant, and went up to pay my respects to her. On my return to Mr. Mackenzie, he asked me who she was ; I told him 'twas the daughter of a reverend friend of mine in the west country. He returned, there was something very striking, to his idea, in her appearance. On my desiring to know what it was, he was pleased to say, "She has a great deal of the elegance of a well-bred lady about her, with all the sweet simplicity of a country-girl."

My compliments to all the happy inmates of Saint Margaret's.

I am, dear sir,

Yours most gratefully,

ROBERT BURNS.

XIV.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 15th February, 1787.

SIR,

PARDON my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me, in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast any thing higher than a distant acquaintance with a country-clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment: but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see, with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss W. has done me, please, sir, return her, in my name, my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which, for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the *offspring of the heart*, gave me a great deal of pleasure. *I have little pretensions to critic lore: there*

are, I think, two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, *sombre* tenderness of time-settled sorrow.

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why.

XV.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

Edinburgh, 1787.

MY LORD,

I WANTED to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town: but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a “human face divine.” The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, There is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your lordship, by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition.* I owe much to your lordship; and what has not in some other instances always been the case

* It does not appear that the Earl granted this request, nor have the verses alluded to been found among the MSS.

with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more: and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment where I was under the patronage of one of the much favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me, then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be

Your lordship's highly indebted,
and ever grateful humble servant.

XVI.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

MY LORD,

THE honour your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember:

"Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
They best can give it who deserve it most."

Your lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing *more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once*

hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my lord, in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words :

“ I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain : I wish through these wounds to imprint a lasting lesson on your heart. I will not mention how many of my salutary advices you have despised : I have given you line upon line, and precept upon precept; and while I was chalking out to you the straight way to wealth and character, with audacious effrontery you have zig-zagged across the path, contemning me to my face : you know the consequences. It is not yet three months since home was so hot for you, that you were on the wing for the western shore of the Atlantic, not to make a fortune, but to hide your misfortune.

“ Now that your dear-loved Scotia puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these Will-o'-Wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from the veriest poverty; but still it is half a step from it. If all that I can urge be ineffectual, let her who seldom calls to you in vain, let the call of pride prevail with you. You know how you feel at the iron gripe of ruthless oppression: you know how you bear the galling *meer of contumellious greatness*. I hold you out

the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence and character, on the one hand : I tender you poverty, vility, dependence, and wretchedness, on the other. I will not insult your understanding by bidding you make a choice."*

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must submit to my humble station, and woo my rustic pen in my wonted way at the plough-tail. Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my friends, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, sometimes, as now, draw forth the swelling tear.

XVII.

TO THE HONOURABLE BAILIES OF CANON
EDINBURGH.

GENTLEMEN,

I AM sorry to be told, that the remains of Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, whose talents, for ages to come, will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your church among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

Some memorial to direct the steps of the stranger to the tomb of Scottish Song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who has been, more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory; a tribute I wish to have the honour of presenting.

* Copied from the Bee, vol. ii. p. 319, and compared with the Author's MSS.

I petition you, then, Gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your very humble servant, (*sic subscribitur*).

ROBERT BURNS.

XVIII.

TO

MY DEAR SIR,

You may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say—thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the bye, there is nothing in the whole frame of man which seems to me so unaccountable as that thing called conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use: but, at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun: and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked 'deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts conscience, and harrows us with the feelings of the d*****.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your

truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to.
The prose extract is literally as Mr. Sprcott sent it me.

The Inscription of the Stone is as follows :

HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET.

Born, September 5th, 1751—Died, 16th October, 1774.

No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,

“ No storied urn nor animated bust ;”

This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way

To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust.

On the other side of the Stone is as follows :

“ By special grant of the Managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.”

XIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, March 22, 1787.

MADAM,

I READ your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, *I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom* ; now I am distinguished, patronized, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find i'

necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures; his hints, with respect to propriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects: there I can give you no light;—it is all

“Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
Athwart the gloom profound.”

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride: to continue to deserve it, is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, heaven knows! I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long enough with life: 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for: and some other bosom-ties perhaps equally tender.

Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable: nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half-sanctify a heedless character: but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care; *where the trust is sacred and the ties are dear, that*

man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough; and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry: being bred to labour secures me independence; and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life: but, while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country, and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honoured Madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

* * * * *

XX.

EXTRACTS FROM HIS COMMON PLACE BOOK.

Edinburgh, April 9, 1787.

As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, *that, 'half a word fixed, upon, or near the spot,'*

worth a cart-load of recollection.' I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

For these reasons I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character that any way strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, *without feud or favour*.—Where I hit on any thing clever, my own applause will, in some measure, feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security, at least equal to the *bosom* of any friend whatever.

My own private story likewise, my love-adven-

tures, my rambles: the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted.—In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connexion between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.

There confidence, confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion, that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly "reigns and revels." But this is not my lot; and, in my situation, if I am wise (which by the bye I have no great chance of being), my fate should be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, "to watch alone on the house-tops." — Oh the pity!

* * * * *

There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received every where, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due*; he meets at a great man's table, a 'Squire something, or a S' *somebody*: he knows the noble landlord, at hea

gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice, that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty?

The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, Dunderrpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

With Dr. Blair I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, What do I care for him, or his pomp either?

* * * * *

It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one; but, in my opinion, Dr. Blair is merely an *astounding proof* what industry and application can

do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance; but he is justly at the head of the list of fine writing; and a critic of the first rank in prose; even in poetry, a man of Nature's making can only take the *pas* of the world. He has a heart, not of the very finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is truly worthy, and most respectable character.

XXI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 15th April, 1793.

MADAM,

THERE is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Swift may hide a selfish heart. For my part, Madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this morning broken open your letter, but

" Rude am I in speech,
And therefore little can I grace my cause
In speaking for myself —"

so I shall not trouble you with any fine specious and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest and warmest sense of your goodness.

I come abroad in print for certain on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only in the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for *Dr. Moore's* and *Miss W.'s* copies, through the

dium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place; but that we can settle when I have the honour of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith* was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him.

XXII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 23d April, 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs. Dunlop. I am ill-skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, Sir, for the honour you have done me; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book, is what I have in common with the world; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight; and, after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, *Cowden Knowes*, *Banks of Yarrow*, *Tweed*, &c., I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid

* Adam Smith.

my meteor-appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to miss W. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.

XXIII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 30th April, 1787.

———Your criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being either in prose or verse.

I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, critics, &c., as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by—illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favourite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my *Dream*, which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in

four weeks, or less, to have the honour of appearing at Dunlop, in its defence, in person.

XXIV.

TO THE REVEREND DR. HUGH BLAIR.

Lawn-Market, Edinburgh, 3d May, 1787.

REVEREND AND MUCH-RESPECTED SIR,

I LEAVE Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship you have shown me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation ; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark ; and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country, whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man ; I knew very well, that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over. I have made up my mind, that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof impression of Bengo's work for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am. &c.

XXV.

TO A FRIEND.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS JOURNEY.

1787.

* * * * *

On our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English; it was like angels, at intervals; the ladies sung Scotch songs like angels, at intervals; then we flew at it like the bowster, *Tullochgorum, Loch Errochside*, &c. like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or prognosticating a storm in a hairst day.—When dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl & good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes we went out to pay our devotions to the lamp of day peering over the towering top of the mond. We all kneeled; our worthy landlady held the bowl; each man a full glass in his hand, and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming like Thomas-a-Rhymer's prophecies. After a small refreshment of the gifts of the gods, we proceeded to spend the day on Loch Leven, and reach Dumbarton in the evening. We were met by another good fellow's house, and consequently we went out to morrow to the bottle; when we went out to morrow we found ourselves "No vera fou b

• Scotch tunes.

My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch side, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gayly mounted, fell sadly astern ; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, she strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts, with the hair-halter: just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breechless a—e in a clipt hedge ; and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny Geddes trode over me with such cautious reverence, that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected ; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say, a wife too ; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus, and like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one indeed, of my former happiness ; that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. *My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have no paradisiacal evening interviews stolen from*

the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only * * * *. This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners ; and in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal ; but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in * * *, and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured in my careless way to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms ; and after her return to * * *, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther I suppose than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mountain-lark in an April morning ; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport ; and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aerial towerings, pop down at my foot like corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes ; they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by

ROBERT BURNS.

XXVI.

TO DR. MOORE.

Mauchline, 2d August, 1787.

SIR,

FOR some months past I have been rambling over the country; but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country; you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative; though I know it will be often at my own expense;—for I assure you, sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble,—I have, I say, like him, *turned my eyes to behold madness and folly*, and, like him, too frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. * * * After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do: a predicament he has more than once been in before.

I have not the most distant pretensions to assume that character which the pye-coated guardians of

escutcheons call a gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted in the Herald's Office; and, looking through that granary of honours, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

“ My ancient but ignoble blood
“ Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood.”

Gules, Purpure, Argent, &c. quite disowned me.

My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large; where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom.—I have met with few who understood *men, their manners, and their ways*, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son. For the first six or seven years of my life, my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farm-house; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye till they could discern between good and evil; so with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate. At those years I was by no means a *favourite with any body*. I was a good deal noted for a *retentive memory*, a stubborn sturdy something

my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot * piety. I say *idiot* piety, because I was then but a^c child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraps, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look out in suspicious places: and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, *How are thy servants blest, O Lord!* I particularly remember one half-stanza, which was music to my boyish ear—

“ For though on dreadful whirls we hung
 “ High on the broken wave.—”

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more

* Idiot for idiotic.

which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom—she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass*. In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion, I cannot tell: you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sung sweetly; and it was her favourite reel, to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song, which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love! *and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well*

as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moor-lands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself.

Thus with me began love and poetry; which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain he made was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease; otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a difference commencing between him and his landlord as to terms, after three years tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in, and carried him away, to *where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*

It is during the time that we lived on this farm that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of ancient story was gathered from *Salmon's* and *Guthrie's* geographical grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature, and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These, with *Pope's Works*, some plays of *Shakspeare*, *Tull* and *Dickson on Agriculture*, *The Pantheon*, *Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, *Stackhouse's History of the Bible*, *Justice's British Gardener's Di-*

rectory, Bayle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had formed the whole of my reading. The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.

In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing school. — My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings; and my going was, what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. My father, as I said before, was subject to strong passions; from that instance of disobedience in me he took a sort of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years. I say dissipation, comparatively with the strictness, and sobriety, and regularity of presbyterian country life; for though the Will o' Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years afterwards within the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was to want an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of Fortune, was the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never

squeeze myself into it ;—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance ! Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity, as from a pride of observation and remark ; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly to solitude ; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense ; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder that, always where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain*. My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other ; and as in every other warfare in this world my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance ; and as I never cared farther for my labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love-adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions ; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.—The very goose fea-

ther in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song; and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love-adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice, baptize these things by the name of Follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty, they are matters of the most serious nature; to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious parts of their enjoyments.

Another circumstance in my life which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *filette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I however struggled on with my *sines* and *co-sines* for a few days more; but, stepping into the

garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

"Like Proserpine, gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower——"

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I stayed, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in this country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly; I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me; and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents, flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l' amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; *Sterne* and *McKenzie*—*Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling*—were my favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk.

mind ; but it was only indulged in according to the humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand ; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme ; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet ! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except *Winter, a Dirge*, the eldest of my printed pieces ; *the Death of Poor Maillie, John Barleycorn*, and songs, first, second, and third.* Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school-business.

My twenty-third year was to me an important æra. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in a neighbouring town (Irwin) to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair. My *** ; and, to finish the whole, as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire, and burnt to ashes ; and I was left, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

I was obliged to give up this scheme : the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head ; and, what was worst of all, he was visibly far gone in a consumption ; and, to crown my distresses, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought u

* " It was upon a Lammas night," &c.

" Now westlin winds, and slaught'ring gun

" *Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,*" &c.

the rear of this infernal file, was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—*Depart from me, ye accursed!*

From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor fellow in despair went to sea; where, after a variety of good and ill fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him, he had been set on shore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of every thing. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this time master of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course strove to imitate him. In some measure I succeeded; I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief;

and the consequence was, that soon after I re the plough, I wrote the *Poet's Welcome*.* Ming only increased, while in this town, by tw volumes of *Pamela*, and one of *Ferdinand Fathom*, which gave me some idea of Rhyme, except some religious pieces that print, I had given up; but meeting with *Ferg Scottish Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-so lyre with emulating vigour. When my fathe his all went among the hell-hounds that pr the kennel of justice; but we made a shift lect a little money in the family amongst u which, to keep us together, my brother and a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted m brained imagination, as well as my social and rous madness; but, in good sense, and ever qualification, he was far my superior.

I entered on this farm with a full reso *Come, go to, I will be wise!* I read farming! I calculated crops; I attended markets; a short, in spite of *the devil, and the world, a flesh*, I believe I should have been a wise man the first year, from unfortunately buying bad the second, from a late harvest, we lost ha crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I ret *like the dog to his vomit, and the sow tha washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*

I now began to be known in the neighbor as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poet spring that saw the light, was a burlesque l tation on a quarrel between two reverend C ists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my

* *Rob the Rhymer's Welcome to his Bastard C*

17. I had a notion myself, that the piece had
 no merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a
 copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such
 things, and told him that I could not guess who was
 the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever.
 With a certain description of the clergy, as well as
 the society, it met with a roar of applause. *Holy Willie's*
sermon next made its appearance, and alarmed the
 church-session so much, that they held several meet-
 ings to look over their spiritual artillery, if haply
 any of it might be pointed against prophane rhy-
 mers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on
 the other side, within point-blank shot of their hea-
 venly metal. This is the unfortunate story that
 gave rise to my printed poem, *The Lament*. This
 was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet
 bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one
 of the two of the principal qualifications for a place
 among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken
 the reckoning of Rationality. I gave up my part of
 the farm to my brother; in truth it was only nomi-
 nally mine; and made what little preparation was
 in my power for Jamaica. But, before leaving my
 native country for ever, I resolved to publish my
 poems. I weighed my productions as impartially
 as was in my power: I thought they had merit;
 and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a
 great fellow, even though it should never reach
 my ears—a poor negro-driver;—or perhaps a vic-
 tin to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the
 world of spirits! I can truly say, that *pauvre in-*
nu as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an
 idea of myself and of my works as I have at this
 moment, when the public has decided in their fa-

your. It ever was my opinion, that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, owing to their ignorance of themselves.— To know myself, had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design in her formation—where the lights and shades in her character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would drown the voice of censure, and the novelty of West-Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off a hundred copies, of which I had got subscribers for about three hundred and fifty. — My vanity highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steep passage in the first ship that was to sail from Clyde; for

“ Hungry ruin had me in the wind.”

I had been for some days sculking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless power of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the way to Greenock; I had composed the last song I

measure in Caledonia. *The gloomy night is
ring fast,** when a letter from Dr. Blacklock
friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by
ng new prospects to my poetic ambition.
doctor belonged to a set of critics, for whose
use I had not dared to hope. His opinion
I would meet with encouragement in Edin-
for a second edition, fired me so much, that
I posted for that city, without a single ac-
tance, or a single letter of introduction. The
ful star that had so long shed its blasting in-
ce in my zenith, for once made a revolution to
adir; and a kind Providence placed me under
patronage of one of the noblest of men, the
of Glencairn. Oublie moi, Grand Dieu, si ja-
je l'oublie!

need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was
new world; I mingled among many classes of
, but all of them new to me, and I was all at-
on to *catch* the characters and *the manners
g as they rise*. Whether I have profited, time
show.

* * * * *

My most respectful compliments to Miss W.
very elegant and friendly letter I cannot an-
at present, as my presence is requisite in Edin-
gh, and I set out to-morrow.

the original letter to Dr. Moore, our poet de-
bed his ancestors as "renting lands of the noble
ths of Marischal, and as having had the honour

* See *Songs*.

of sharing their fate." "I do not," continues he, "use the word *honour* with any reference to political principles; *loyal* and *disloyal*, I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court, known in this country by the name of Club-law, where the right is always with the strongest. But those who dare welcome ruin, and shake hands with infamy, for what they sincerely believe to be the cause of their God or their king, are, as Mark Antony says in Shakspeare of Brutus and Cassius, *honourable men*. I mention this circumstance, because it threw my father on the world at large."

XXVII.

TO MR. WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOL.

Inverness, 5th Sept. 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just time to write the foregoing,* and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the effusion of a half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was extempore, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr. N * * * 's chat, and the jogging of the chaise would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honour or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athol, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast: what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need! I shall never forget.

* *The Humble Petition of Bruar-Water to the Duke of Athol.*

The "little angel band!" I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyars. I shall never forget the fine family-piece I saw at Blair; the amiable, the truly noble duchess, with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table: the lovely "olive plants," as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother; the beautiful Mrs. G * * *; the lovely, sweet Miss C * * *, &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice! My lord duke's kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed! Mr. G * * * of F * * *'s charms of conversation. Sir W. M * * *'s friendship. In short, the recollection of all that polite agreeable company raises an honest glow in my bosom.

XXVIII.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th Sept. 1787.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I ARRIVED here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands, by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and Druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the duke of Athol; thence cross Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athol, another of the duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending nearly two days with

country for Fort George, but
Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth,
the identical bed in which,
Duncan was murdered : lastly,
to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through
and so on, to Aberdeen ; thence
James Burness, from Montrose
ment. I spent two days among
found our aunts, Jean and Isabella,
hale old women. John Cairnes
same year with our father, was
can ; they have had several letters
New York. William Brand is
fellow : but further particulars
which will be in two or three
my stages are not worth rehearsing
from Ossian's country, where

have been trying for a birth for William, but am not likely to be successful. Farewell !

XXIX.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

MY LORD,

I KNOW your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you, but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes, and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme, if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the excise ; I am told that your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners ; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of *home* that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters, from destruction. 'There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother's farm is but a wretched lease ; but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it ; and, after the assistance which I have given, and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds, and instead of seeking what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of *uncommon distress or necessitous old age* ; * * * * *

These, my lord, are my views: I have from the maturest deliberation; and now I shall leave no stone unturned to carry me into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet asked any body else. Indeed my heart sinks with the idea of applying to any other of the persons who have honoured me with their countenance, and who are qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble much at the thought of the cold promise, and denial: but to your lordship I have committed the honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being

Your lordship's much obliged,
And deeply indebted humble servant

XXX.

TO ——— DALRYMPLE, ESQ. OF ORANMORE

Edinburgh

DEAR SIR,

I SUPPOSE the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined, by a course of flattery, to complete his purposes on you all at once, by making you a poet. I broke open the letter he sent me, hummed over the rhymes, and found they were extempore, said to myself, that was very well; but when I saw at the bottom, "I shall ever value with grateful respect, your wide but nathing spak." I was nearly struck as the friends of Job, of affliction

memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

* * * * *

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude, and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or the crushing of the cork rumps; a ducal coronet to lord George G * * *, and the Protestant interest, or St. Peter's keys, to * * * *.

You want to know how I come on. I am just in statu quo, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in "auld use and wont." The noble earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent Being whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful 'squire H. L. or the reverend Mass J. M. go into their primitive nothing. At best they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos, only one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

XXXI.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD.

December, 1787

SIR,

MR. M'Kenzie, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fate as a poet. I have, sir, in one or two instances been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by * * * friends to them, and honoured acquaintance to me, but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested him for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am a master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to inquire, whether form or duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manoeuvre of the needy, sharpening author, fastening on those in upper life who honour him with little notice of him or his works. Indeed, the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, may, in some measure, palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn; but I believe *a careless, indolent inattention to economy, is most inseparable from it*: then there must be

the heart of every bard of Nature's making, a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune, which frequently light on hardy impudence and foot-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his, whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one who pretended in the least to the *manners of the gentleman*, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am; and so inhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude I thank you, sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion—but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, sir, to make you for your goodness, but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever Calumny aim the poisoned shaft at *them* may Friendship be by to ward the blow!

XXXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 21

AFTER six weeks' confinement, I am
walk across the room. They have been
ble weeks, anguish and low spirits me
to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that
resign life as an officer resigns a command
would not *take in* any poor ignorant
selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny
God knows, a miserable soldier engaged
march to the campaign, a starving captain
more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this ; for though
bravery for the warfare of life, I could
some other soldiers, to have as much
or cunning as to dissemble or conceal
ardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which
I suppose, about the middle of next week
Edinburgh, and soon after I shall pay
duty at Dunlop-house.

XXXIII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, 12th Feb. 1788.

Things in your late letters hurt me: not that *say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, honoured Madam, has not only been all my life chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. We indeed been the luckless victim of waywardness: but, alas! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A mathematician without religion, a probable character; an irreligious poet is a monster.

* * * * *

XXXIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mossgiel, 7th March, 1788.

MADAM,
 The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where it ended your letter. That I am often a sinner than my little wit I have, I do confess; but I have directed my recollection to no purpose to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm a great deal worse than I do a devil; at least, as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes

guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honoured friend, who cannot appear in any light but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or if you choose to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all; but, God help us who are wits or witling by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported!

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila.* I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scots, from which, by the bye, took the idea of Coila: ("Tis a poem of Beattie" in the Scots dialect, which perhaps you have never seen.)

“ Ye shak your head, but o’ my flegs,
Ye’ve set old Scots on her legs:
Lang had she line wi’ buffe and flegs,
Bombard and dizzie,
Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
Waes me, poor hizzie!”

XXXV.

TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Mauchline, 31st March, 1788.

YESTERDAY, my dear sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Gal-

* A lady (daughter of Mrs. Dunlop) was making a picture from the description of Coila in the Vision.

loway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favourite, air *Captain Okean* coming at length in my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.*

I am tolerably pleased with these verses; but, as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine, that my muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming: at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the * * * * in me.

My very best compliments and good wishes to Mrs. Cleghorn.

XXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 28th April, 1788.

MADAM,

YOUR powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will

* Here the Bard gives the first stanza of the *Chevalier's Lament*.

easily guess I must be pretty busy ! but that is not all. As I got the offer of the excise-business without solicitation ; and as it costs me only six months' attendance for instructions to entitle me to a commission, which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed ; I thought five-and-thirty pounds a-year was no bad dernier resort for a poor poet, if fortune, in her jade tricks, should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, madam, I prepared, with the sincerest pleasure, to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night, to set out on Sunday ; but for some nights preceding, I had slept in an apartment where the force of the winds and rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, &c. In consequence, I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday, unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim *Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai-semblable*. Your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life.

* * * * *

Your books have delighted me : Virgil, Dryden, and Tasso, were all equally strangers to me : but of this more at large in my next.

XXXVII.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.

Mauchline, 3d May, 1788.

SIR,

I ENCLOSE you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great unknown Being, who frames the chain of causes and events, prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the Continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, sir, to claim it as my privilege to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.

XXXVIII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 4th May, 1788.

MADAM,

DRYDEN'S Virgil has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the *Georgics* are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is,

indeed, a species of writing entirely new has filled my head with a thousand fanciation : but, alas ! when I read the *Ge* then survey my own powers, 'tis like the Shetland pony, drawn up by the side of a bred hunter, to start for the plate. I am appointed in the *Æneid*. Faultless correspondence, and does highly please, the letter but to that awful character I have not instant pretensions. I do not know what hazard my pretensions to be a critic when I say, that I think Virgil, in many a *servile* copier of Homer. If I had the means, I could parallel many passages which has evidently copied, but by no means Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing owing to the translators ; for, from every specimen of Dryden, I think him, in genius of language, Pope's master. I have not Tasso enough to form an opinion : in this letter you shall have my ideas of him ; and conscious my criticisms must be very imperfect, as there I have ever felt at my want of learning most.

XXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

27th.

MADAM,
I HAVE been torturing my philosophy to
to account for that kind partiality of yours
unlike * * * * *

has followed me in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late Will-o'-Wisp appearance, that "here I had no continuing city;" and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendour put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life, insignificance and poverty.

* * * * *

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me), than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the planks that composed the floor, were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who, though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers, of the same nature with madame, are from time to time, their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts, sold for months and years, * * * * *

* * * not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the important few.* We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwith-

* Servants, in Scotland, are hired from term to term; i. e. from Whitsunday to Martinmas, &c.

standing their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honour to commend them. But, light be the turf upon his breast who taught—"Reverence thyself." We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride.

* * * * *

XL.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, 13th June, 1788.

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthen'd chain."

GOLDSMITH.

'THIS is the second day, my honoured friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old smoky *Spence*; far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except Jenny Geddes, the old mare I ride on: while uncouth cares and novel plans hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, consequently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudged on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at

that period of my existence when the soul is laying
 her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I be-
 lieve, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of
 mind.

“ The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer ?
 Or what need he regard his *single* woes ? ” &c.

Your surmise, madam, is just ; I am indeed a
 husband.

* * *

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved
 female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of
 the naked elements ; but as I enabled her to *pur-*
chase a shelter ; and there is no sporting with a
 fellow-creature's happiness or misery.

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of
 disposition ; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with
 all its powers to love me ; vigorous health and
 sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage
 by a more than commonly handsome figure ; these,
 I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though
 she should never have read a page but *the Scriptures*
of the Old and New Testament, nor have danced in
 a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding.

* * *

XLI.

EXTRACT FROM HIS COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

Ellisland, Sunday, 14th June, 1788.

THIS is now the third day that I have been in this
 country. ‘ Lord, what is man ! ’ What a bustling

What 'tis you are, a

Will make us wise a

I am such a coward in
that I would almost as
Adam, 'gladly lay me
at peace.'

But a wife and childre
the stream, till some sud
silly vessel; or in the l
own craziness reduce it t
to those giddy follies, tho
though half-sanctified by
wit and humour, are at
with the precious current
poisoning the whole, that
the water is naught and t.

joined their warmest suffrages, their most
 rful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to
 the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason
 r part to repent it.—I can fancy how, but have
 seen where, I could have made a better choice.
 ;, then, let me act up to my favourite motto,
 glorious passage in Young—

‘ On reason build resolve,
 That column of true majesty in man !’

XLII.

TO MR. P. HILL.

r DEAR HILL.

ALL say nothing at all to your mad present
 u have long and often been of important ser-
 to me, and I suppose you mean to go on con-
 ng obligations until I shall not be able to lift
 ny face before you. In the mean time, as sir
 r de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold
 in which he made his will, ordered his ser-
 s great coats for mourning, so, because I have
 this week plagued with an indigestion, I have
 you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

digestion is the devil : nay, 'tis the devil and
 It besets a man in every one of his senses. I
 my appetite at the sight of successful knavery,
 sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense
 elf-important folly. When the hollow-hearted
 ch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my
 er ; the proud man's wine so offends my palate

that it chokes me in the gullet ; and th
feather'd, pert coxcomb, is so disgusting
tril, that my stomach turns. *

If ever you have any of these disagre
tions, let me prescribe for you patience
my cheese. I know that you are no
your good things among your friends, a
them are in much need of a slice. T
eye is our friend, Smellie ; a man positi
first abilities and greatest strength of m
as one of the best hearts and keenest
ever met with ; when you see him, as, al
smarting at the pinch of distressful circ
aggravated by the sneer of contumeli
ness — a bit of my cheese alone will not
but if you add a tankard of brown stout,
add a magnum of right Oporto, you v
sorrows vanish like the morning mist
summer sun.

C * * * h, the earliest friend, excep
brother, that I have on earth, and
worthiest fellows that ever any man ca
name of friend, if a luncheon of my ch
help to rid him of some of his superab
desty, you would do well to give it him.

David,* with his *Courant*, comes too
recollection, and I beg you will help I
from the said ewe-milk cheese, to ens
digest those — bedaubing paragraphs v
he is eternally larding the lean character
great men in a certain great town. I gr
periods are very well turned ; so, a fres

* Printer of the Edinburgh Evening Co

good thing, but when thrown at a man in a
 ry, it does not at all improve his figure, not to
 tion the irreparable loss of the egg.

y facetious friend, D * * * r, I would wish also
 : a partaker; not to digest his spleen, for that
 oughs off; but to digest his last night's wine at
 last field-day of the Crochallan corps.*

mong our common friends, I must not forget
 of the dearest of them, Cunningham. The
 ality, insolence, and selfishness of a world un-
 thy of having such a fellow as he is in it, I know
 is in his stomach; and if you can help him to
 thing that will make him a little easier on that
 e, it will be very obliging.

as to honest J * * * S * * * e, he is such a con-
 ed happy man, that I know not what can annoy
 , except perhaps he may not have got the bet-
 of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain
 t gave him one night at supper, the last time
 said poet was in town.

though I have mentioned so many men of law,
 all have nothing to do with them professedly.—
 : faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their
 ets, that is another thing; God knows, they
 : much to digest!

he clergy I pass by; their profundity of erudi-
 , and their liberality of sentiment; their total
 it of pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy,
 so proverbially notorious as to place them far,
 above either my praise or censure.

was going to mention a man of worth, whom I
 e the honour to call friend, the laird of Craig-

* A club of choice spirits.

darroch; but I have spoken to the King's-arms inn here, to have, at meeting, a large ewe-milk cheese the benefit of the Dumfriesshire them to digest the duke of Queens-tical conduct.

I have just this moment an oppo-
vate hand to Edinburgh, as perhap-
digest double postage.

XLIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP

Mauchline,

HONOURED MADAM,

YOUR kind letter welcomed me
Ayrshire. I am indeed seriously
at the *quantum* of your *luck-penny*
hurt as I was, I could not help lau-
tily at the noble lord's apology for
kin.

I would write you from Nithsd
my direction here, but I have so
nity of calling at a post office once
am six miles from Dumfries, am
myself, and, as yet, have little ac-
neighbourhood. Besides, I am
my farm, building a dwelling-hou-
I am almost an evangelical man
have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your
tears in my eyes. "The heart

was, and a stranger intermeddleth not there-
 ' The repository of these "sorrows of the
 ," is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum*: and 'tis
 a chosen friend, and that too at particular
 d times, who dares enter into them.

" Heaven oft tears the bosom chords
 That nature finest strung."

u will excuse this quotation for the sake of the
 or. Instead of entering on this subject farther,
 ll transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a her-
 ge belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale
 bourhood. They are almost the only favours
 nuses have conferred on me in that country.

" Thou whom chance may hither lead."

See Poems.

nce I am in the way of transcribing, the fol-
 ng were the production of yesterday as I jogged
 gh the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intend
 ting them, or something like them, in an epistle
 going to write to the gentleman on whose
 dship my excise-hopes depend, Mr. Graham of
 y, one of the worthiest and most accomplished
 emen, not only of this country, but I will dare
 y it, of this age. The following are just the
 crude thoughts "unhousel'd, unanointed, un-
 al'd."

* * * * *

y the tuneful muses' helpless train :
 ak, timid landmen on life's stormy main :
 e world were blest, did bliss on them depend ;
 ! that " the friendly e'er should want a friend !"

The little fate bestows they share as soon ;
 Unlike sage, proverb'd, wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
 Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son
 Who life and wisdom at one race begun ;
 Who feel by reason, and who give by rule ;
 (Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool !)
 Who make poor *will* do wait upon *I should* ;
 We own they're prudent, but who owns they're good ?

Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye !
 God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy !
 But come

Here the muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow ! you vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell !

XLIV.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, 10th August, 1788.

MY MUCH HONOURED FRIEND,
 YOURS of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire : I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings ! I express myself in the

fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not, from your very odd reason, that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing, except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs. Burns, madam, is the identical woman

* * * * *

When she first found herself "as women wish to be who love their lords," as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and the house, but, on my rumoured West-Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my eclatant return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors: and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands; and who could trifle with such a deposit?

* * * * *

I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life, but, upon my honour, I have never *seen* the individual instance.

* * * * *

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a *female partner for life*, who could have entered into

BURNS'S LETTERS.

my favourite studies, relished my favourite and &c., without probably entailing on me, at the time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perishing affectation, with all the other blessed bores of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervading the misses of the would-be gentry.

* * * * *

I like your way in your church-yard lucubration. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, *in progression*, by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you, my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind, is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dis-social, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

XLV.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, 16th August, 1788.
I AM in a fine disposition, my honoured friend, to send you an elegiac epistle; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian.

"Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?"

* * * * *

ly increasing cares in this, as yet, strange coun-
—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futu-
—consciousness of my own inability for the
uggle of the world — my broadened mark to mis-
une in a wife and children ; — I could indulge
se reflections, till my humour should ferment
the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the
thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat
m to write to you ; as I declare upon my soul, I
ays find *that* the most sovereign balm for my
inded spirit.

was yesterday at Mr. ***'s to dinner, for the
t time. My reception was quite to my mind :
n the lady of the house, quite flattering. She
etimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She
eated one or two to the admiration of all present.
suffrage, as a professional man, was expected : I
once went agonizing over the belly of my con-
nce. Pardon me, ye, my adored household
s — Independence of Spirit, and Integrity of
l ! In the course of conversation, *Johnson's*
rical Museum, a collection of Scottish songs
h the music, was talked of. We got a song on
harpsichord, beginning,

" Raving winds around her blowing."

See *Songs*.

the air was much admired : the lady of the house

asked me whose were the words; "Mine, madam — they are indeed my very best verses:" she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, "king's caff is better than the folk's corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about "casting pearls;" but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste.

* * * * *

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial heaven; whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves whose sinews, whose days, are sold to the minion of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad called *The Life and Age of Man*; beginning thus

" 'Twas in the sixteenth hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testify."

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The Life and Age of Man*.

It is this way of thinking, it is these melanchol truths, that make religion so precious to the poor

miserable children of men — if it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

“ What truth on earth so precious as the lie ? ”

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth ; the soul affianced to her God ; the correspondence fixed with heaven ; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn ; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life ? No : to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire middle of next week : and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest.

XLVI.

TO R. GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

SIR,
WHEN I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athol-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, *asks old Kent why he wished to be in his service,*

he answers, "Because you have that in your favour which I could like to call master." For some such reason, sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronising friend. Propriety of conduct in a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted

* * * * *

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life in the character of a country farmer; but, after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to witness throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jaw whence death, the poor man's last and often true friend, rescued him.

I know, sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it: may I therefore beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

"When Nature her great master-piece design'd."

See Poems.

XLVII.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

Mauchline, 1st October, 1788.

I HAVE been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the "Address to Loch-Lomond," you were so obliging as to send to me. Were I impannelled one of the author's jury to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be "guilty! A poet of Nature's making." It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favourite classic author, in his own walks of study and composition, before him as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me, if I venture to hint, that his imitation of that immortal bard is, in two or three places, rather more servile than such a genius as his required. —*c. g.*

To soothe the madding passions all to peace.

Address.

To soothe the throbbing passions into peace.

Thomson.

I think the *Address* is, in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the *Seasons*. Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first

reading; in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true work of Nature's making, kindles in his course. His ginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like—

" Truth,
The soul of every song that's nobly great."

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is not great. Perhaps I am wrong: this may be but prose-criticism. Is not the phrase, in *line 7*, *l. 6*, "Great lake," too much vulgarized by everyday language, for so sublime a poem?

" Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,"

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration in comparison with other lakes is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep through

" Winding margin of an hundred miles."

The perspective that follows mountains blue—imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew-tree—"Ben-Lomond's lofty cloud-envelop'd head," &c., are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject which has often tried; yet our poet, in his grand picture, interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original:

" The gloom
Deep-seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire

In his preface to the Storm, "The glens, dark between!" is noble highland landscape! "rain ploughing the red mould," too, is beautifully fancied. Ben-Lomond's "lofty pathless top,"

good expression ; and the surrounding view from it is truly great ; the

“ Silver mist
Beneath the beaming sun,”

is well described ; and here he has contrived to enliven his poem with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole ; but the swain's wish to carry “ some faint idea of the vision bright,” to entertain her “ partial listening ear,” is a pretty thought. But, in my opinion, the most beautiful passages in the whole poem are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Loch-Lomond's “ hospitable flood ;” their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c.; and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any thing in the *Seasons*. The idea of “ the floating tribes distant seen, far glistening to the moon,” provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. “ The howling winds,” the “ hideous roar” of “ the white cascades,” are all in the same style.

I forget that, while I am thus holding forth, with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must, however, mention, that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that beautiful paragraph, beginning, “ The gleaming lake,” &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the two last paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened

scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began like to know who the author is ; but, I be, please present him with my grateful the entertainment he has afforded me.*

A friend of mine desired me to com him two books, *Letters on the Religion Man*, a book you sent me before ; and, *Unmasked, or the Philosopher the grea* Send me them by the first opportunity. you sent me is truly elegant. I only wish in two volumes.

XLVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, AT MOREHAM I

Mauchline, 13th I

MADAM,

I HAD the very great pleasure of dining yesterday. Men are said to flatter wom they are weak ; if it is so, poets must still ; for Misses R. and K., and Miss with their flattering attentions and art ments, absolutely turned my head. I ov not lard me over as many a poet does * * * * * but t
toxicated me with their sly insinuations a inuendoes of compliment, that if it has for a lucky recollection, how much additk

* The poem, entitled, *An Address to Lock* said to be written by a gentleman, now one of tl the High-school at Edinburgh ; and the same w the beautiful story of the *Paria*, as published i Dr. Anderson.

and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked upon myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the Major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest quey* in Ayrshire, which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on Hallow-day, I am determined annually, as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

* * * * *

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the Major's hospitality. There will be soon three score and ten miles of permanent distance between us ; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

XLIX.

TO * * * * *

Nov. 8, 1788.

SIR,
NOTWITHSTANDING the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy secta-

* Heifer.

ries have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us ; still the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, or insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shows that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind, who is undone, the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes ;—who but sympathises with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother ? we forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday to my parish-church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgments to the AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious Revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious : to it we are likewise indebted for the present Royal Family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh, abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils ; and we may bless God for all his goodness to us as a nation, without, at the same time, cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most

of us would have done had we been in their situation.

"The bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart," may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present Royal Family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects' rights? Might not the epithets of "bloody and tyrannical" be, with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, Sir, seems to be this:—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people: with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the jostling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but likewise, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family,

who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laid at for the folly and impracticability of their attempt in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God, but cannot join in the ridicule against them. I do not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden, until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, sir, that in our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain person under our national protection, should complain against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms as our fore-fathers did of the House of Stuart? I will not, I cannot enter into the merits of the cause, but I dare say the American Congress of 1776, will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688; and their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wretched headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, Sir: let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.*

L.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th Dec. 1788.

MY DEAR HONOURED FRIEND,
Yours, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. "Almost blind, and wholly deaf," are melancholy news of human nature; but when told of a much-loved and honoured friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie, which has gradually and strongly entwisted itself among the dearest cords of my bosom; and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely, when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But be that as it may, the heart of the

* This letter was sent to the publisher of some newspaper, probably the publisher of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*.

man, and the fancy of the poet, are the two grand considerations for which I live : if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better be a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any idea superior to breaking of clods, and picking up grubs : not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time—If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be of no great pleasure to either of us ; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, Madam, for I will make my threatenings good. I am to be at the new-year-day fair of Ayr, and, by all that is sacred in the word Friend ! I *will* come and see you.

* * * * *

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old school-fellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world !—They spoil these “ social offsprings of the heart.” Two veterans of the “ men of the world ” would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. A-propos, is not the Scotch phrase, “ Auld lang syne,” exceedingly expressive.—There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs : I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Kerr will save you the postage.*

* “ Should auld acquaintances be forgot.”

See *Songs*.

let be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-
 ed poet who composed this glorious fragment!
 is more of the fire of native genius in it than
 , doted of modern English Bacchanalians.
 I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help in-
 g two other old stanzas which please me
 ily.

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
 An' fill it in a silver tassie;
 That I may drink, before I go,
 A service to my bonnie lassie:
 The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith;
 Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the ferry;
 The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
 And I maun lea'e my bonnie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
 The glittering spears are ranked ready;
 The shouts o' war are heard afar,
 The battle closes thick and bloody!
 But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
 Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
 Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar;
 It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary.

LI.

TO MISS DAVIES,

*Young Lady who had heard he had been making
 a Ballad on her, enclosing that Ballad.)*

December, 1788.

DAM,

UNDERSTAND my very worthy neighbour, Mr. Rid-
 ing informed you that I have made you the

subject of some verses. There is something so provoking in the idea of being the burden of a ballad that I do not think Job or Moses, though surrounded by patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was which so my worthy friend has done me a mischief, which I dare say, he never intended; and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental group of life into which one is thrown wherever this gentleman met with a character more than ordinary degree congenial to his he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely, as I said, as a *nota bene* to point out the agreeable reflection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him is my muse to me: and in these verses I do myself the honour to send you a *memento* exactly of the same kind that he indulged in.

It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of caprice, than the delicacy of my taste, but I am often tired, disgusted, and hurt, with the insincerity, affectation, and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person "after my own heart," I sensitively feel what an orthodox Protestant we call a species of idolatry, which acts on my feelings like inspiration; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse, than an Eolian harp can refuse tones to the streaming air. A distich or two will

be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were gray-bearded age: but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment, are equally striking and unaffected, by heavens! though I had lived threescore years a married man, and threescore years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea; and I am truly sorry that the enclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject.

LII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, New-Year-Day Morning.

THIS, dear Madam, is a morning of wishes; and would to God that I came under the apostle James's description!—*the prayer of a righteous man avail-eth much*. In that case, Madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings: every thing that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment, should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a presbyterian, that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery.

This day, the first Sunday of May, a breezy blue-skied noon, some time about the beginning,

and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about end of autumn;—these, time out of mind, been with me a kind of holiday.

* * * * *

I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in Spectator, "The Vision of Mirza;" a piece struck my young fancy before I was capable of ing an idea to a word of three syllables, "On 5th day of the moon, which, according to the tom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, having washed myself and offered up my most devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdad order to pass the rest of the day in meditation prayer."

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of substance or structure of our souls, so cannot count for those seeming caprices in them, that should be particularly pleased with this thing struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I see some favourite flowers in spring, among which the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild-briar rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud soot whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers in a tumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of mind like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell my dear friend, to what can this be owing. As a piece of machinery, which, like the Eolian lyre, passive, takes the impression of the passing wind? Or do these workings argue some

within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.

* * * * *

LIII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 4th Jan. 1789.

SIR,

As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian colossus, that my mind misgives me; and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have at last got some business with you, and business-letters are written by the style-book. I say my business is with you, sir, for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late eclat was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface to my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from Nature to the pœtic character. I have not a doubt but the *knack, the aptitude*, to learn the Muses' trade, is a

gift bestowed by Him, "who forms the secret bias of the soul;" but I as firmly believe that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains. At least I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day, a day that may never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good-nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I enclose you an essay of mine in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the epistle addressed to R. G. esq. or Robert Graham, of Fintry, esq., a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story; and to give you the one I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of —

* * * * *

I believe I shall, in whole, 100*l.* copy-right included, clear about 400*l.* some little odds ; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare.

* * * * *

To give the rest of my story in brief, I have married " my Jean," and taken a farm : with the first step I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied ; with the last it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother, who supports my aged mother ; another still younger brother, and three sisters, in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about 180*l.* to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much—I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part : I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged ; and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy : I have an excise-officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr. Graham, who is one of the commissioners of excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury warrant, for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c.

* * * * *

TO PROFESS

Ellisland, n

SIR,

THE enclosed sealed pa
few days after I had the
in Ayrshire, but you wei
I have added a few more
for which I am indebted
The piece inscribed to R.
I sent Mr. Graham, of F
quest for his assistance i
great moment. To that
doubly indebted, for dec
import to my dearest int
grateful to the delicate fet
poem is a species of comj
do not intend it shall be
as you will

cular part I send you merely as a sample of my hand at portrait-sketching; but lest idle conjecture should pretend to point out the original, please let it be for your single, sole inspection.

Need I make any apology for this trouble to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness; who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend? A poet as I am by trade, these decisions to me are of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of greatness, I resign with ease; but to the distinguished champions of genius and learning I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Mr. Stewart's critical strictures; the justness (iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr. Gregory's remarks, and the delicacy of Professor Dalzel's taste, I shall ever revere. I shall be in Edinburgh some time next month.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your highly obliged,

and very humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

LV.

TO BISHOP GEDDES.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 3d Feb. 1789.

VENERABLE FATHER,

As I am conscious, that wherever I am you do me the honour to interest yourself in my welfare, it

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G

gives me pleasure to inform you that I am here last, stationary in the serious business of life, I have now not only the retired leisure, but the bent inclination, to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am? and what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the matter there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself the way pointed out by Nature and Nature's God. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and family were encumbrances which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was, being at eternal warfare with myself, on account of habitual folly, to give them no worse name, which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidel would to me ever justify, I must have been a fool to have hesitated, and a madman to have made any other choice.

* * * * *

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure: I have good hopes of my farm; should they fail, I have an excise commission, which on my simple petition, will at any time procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an excise-officer, but I do not intend to borrow honour from any profession; and though the salary be comparatively small, it is great to a man who has spent the first twenty-five years of my life in teaching me to expect.

* * * * *

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess, my reverend and much-honoured friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten. I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the muses. I am determined to study man and nature, and in that view incessantly; and to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving.

You will see in your book, which I beg your pardon for detaining so long, that I have been tuning my lyre on the banks of Nith. Some large poetic plans that are floating in my imagination, or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you; which, if you are then in Edinburgh, I shall have about the beginning of March.

That acquaintance, worthy sir, with which you were pleased to honour me, you must still allow me to challenge; for with whatever unconcern I give up my transient connexion with the merely great, I cannot lose the patronising notice of the learned and good, without the bitterest regret.

LVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th March, 1789.

HERE am I, my honoured friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man who has a home, however humble or remote—if that home is like mine, the scene of domestic comfort—the bustle of Edin-

burgh will soon be a business of sickening gust.

“ Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you.

When I must sculk into a corner, lest the rat equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim, “ Vain merits has he had, or what demerit have I had in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule, and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I am kicked about the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?” I have read somewhere of a monarch (Spain I think it was), who was so out of humour with the Ptolemean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Princes-street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his corner, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we push out a perspective. This trifling alteration, I mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of his majesty's liege subjects, in the way of turning the head and tiptoe-strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at last to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow and making way to a great man, and that too without the second of the precise spherical angle of rever-

or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires ; as a measuring-glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem, which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one great fault—it is by far too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice, under the title of Scottish poets, that the very term Scottish Poetry borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr. Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances ; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps a little oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the mean time, allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine * * * * *. I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink, mildly fearful, even from applause,
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming * * * *, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,

Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
 Your form shall be the image of your mind;
 Your manners shall so true your soul express,
 That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
 Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
 And even sickening envy must approve.*

LVII.

TO THE REV. P. CARFRAE.

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REV. SIR,

I do not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter which accompanied Mr. Mylne's poem

* * * * *

I am much to blame: the honour Mr. Mylne done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the dearing, though melancholy circumstance of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication; but, on second thoughts, I am afraid that, in the present case, it would be an improper step. My success perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an inundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription-bills for Scottish poems have so dunned, and daily do dun, the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr. M.'s poems

* These beautiful lines, we have reason to believe, were the production of the lady to whom this letter is addressed.

, &c., be at all prudent, in my opinion, it should not be a Scottish poem. The prolabours of a man of genius are, I hope, as le as any profits whatever; and Mr. Mylne's are most justly entitled to that honest harsh fate has denied himself to reap. But let ds of Mr. Mylne's fame (among whom I : honour of ranking myself) always keep is respectability as a man and as a poet, no measure that, before the world knows g about him, would risk his name and : being classed with the fools of the times.

, Sir, some experience of publishing, and n which I would proceed with Mr. Mylne's

this: I would publish in two or three and Scottish public papers, any one of his poems which should, by private judges, be the most excellent, and mention it, at the re, as one of the productions of a Lothian of respectable character, lately deceased, seems his friends had it in idea to publish subscription, for the sake of his numerous - not in pity to that family, but in justice his friends think the poetic merits of the ; and to secure, in the most effectual man- hose tender connexions, whose right it is, iary reward of those merits.

THE gentleman who
Nielson, a worthy cle
and a very particular
have troubled him w
him over to your good
it in a way in which he
and where you can
Nielson is on his way
grace of Queensberry,
good deal of important
your instructions respect
of travelling, &c., for h
channel. I should not
liberty with you, but th
have the honour of yo
that, to be a poor ho
of recommendation to

cordiality. However, in the particular part
duct which roused my poetic wrath, she
a less blameable. In January last, on my
yrshire, I had put up at Bailie Whigham's
har, the only tolerable inn in the place.
; was keen, and the grim evening and howl-
l were ushering in a night of snow and
ly horse and I were both much fatigued
; labours of the day; and just as my-
e Bailie and I were bidding defiance to the
ver a smoking bowl, in wheels the funeral
y of the late great Mrs. * * *, and poor I
ed to brave all the horrors of the tempes-
ght, and jade my horse, my young favourite
hom I had just christened Pegasus, twelve
ther on, through the wildest moors and
yrshire, to New Cumnock, the next inn.
vers of poesy and prose sink under me,
ould describe what I felt. Suffice it to say,
n a good fire, at New Cumnock, had so far
d my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote
sed ode.

at Edinburgh lately, and settled finally with
ch; and I must own, that, at last, he has
icable and fair with me.

IS'S LETTERS.

LIX.

TO MR. HILL.

Ellisland, 2d April, 1789.

Excuses, my dear Bibliopolus (God
condemning language!) that I have sat
on this vile paper.

* * * * *

Mr. ; it is that cardinal virtue, pru-
dence, you will sit down, and either com-
pose a panegyric. If you are going to
do

* * * * *

rather to compound, something very
remarkable frugality; that I write to
most esteemed friends on this wretched
paper was originally intended for the venal
drunken exciseman, to take dirty notes
in the vault of an ale-cellar.

Prudence! thou mother of ten thousand ble-
ssings! cook of fat beef and dainty greens!—
Manufacturer of warm Shetland hose, and com-
forts!—thou old housewife, darning thy
stockings with thy ancient spectacles on
nose!—lead me, hand me, in thy clutching
it, up those heights, and through those
hitherto inaccessible, and impervious to
our, weary feet:—not those Parnassian
peak and barren, where the hungry worship-

let to deuce

that a Shakes-
peare—John
shall my prose
be best for me.
that I owe Mr. F
a worthy friend
for him, and any

pers of fame are breathless, clambering, hanging between heaven and hell; but those glittering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, all-powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate court of joys and pleasures: where the sunny exposure of plenty, and the hot walls of profusion, produce those blissful fruits of luxury, exotics in this world, and natives of Paradise!—Thou withered sibyl, my sage conductress, usher me into the refulgent, adored presence!—The power, splendid and potent as he now is, was once the puling nursling of thy faithful care and tender arms! Call me thy son, thy cousin, thy kinsman or favourite, and adjure the god, by the scenes of his infant years, no longer to repulse me as a stranger, or an alien, but to favour me with his peculiar countenance and protection! He daily bestows his greatest kindnesses on the undeserving and the worthless—assure him that I bring ample documents of meritorious demerits! Pledge yourself for me, that for the glorious cause of LUCRE, I will do any thing—be any thing—but the horse-leech of private oppression, or the vulture of public robbery!

* * * * *

But to descend from heroics,

* * * * *

I want a Shakespeare; I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. In these and all my prose commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honour that I owe Mr. Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton Mills, my worthy friend, and your well-wisher. Please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you

see him, ten shillings worth of any thing to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mention already begun, under the direction of Captain R. There is another in emulation of it going on, under the auspices of Mr. Montagu, which will be on a greater scale. Captain R. gave his infant society a great number of old books, else I had written you on this subject; but one of these days, I shall trouble you with a commission for "The Monkland Friend"—a copy of The Spectator, Mirror, a Man of Feeling, Man of the World, Geographical Grammar, with some religious tracts likewise be our first order.

When I grow richer I will write to you by post, to make amends for this sheet. Every guinea has a five-guinea errand and

My dear sir,

Your faithful, poor, but honest

LX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th

* * * * *

I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or wish to send it to you; and if knowing these give half the pleasure to you, transmitting them to you gives to me, I am sure

* * * * *

I have a poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the right hon. C. J. Fox : but how long that fancy may hold, I cannot say. A few of the first lines I have just rough-sketched, as follows :

“ How wisdom and folly meet, mix, and unite.”*

On the 20th current I hope to have the honour of assuring you, in person, how sincerely I am—

* * * * *

LXI.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 4th May, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR *duty-free* favour of the 26th April I received two days ago : I will not say I perused it with pleasure ; that is the cold compliment of ceremony : I perused it, sir, with delicious satisfaction—in short, it is such a letter, that not you, nor your friend, but the legislature, by express proviso in their postage-laws, should frank. A letter informed with the soul of friendship is such an honour to human nature, that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent virtue.

* See *Poems* ;—Fragment, inscribed to the right honourable C. J. Fox.

I have just put the last hand to a little poem which I think will be something to your taste. One morning lately as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass-seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young ones. Indeed there is something in that business of destroying, for our sport, individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue.

“ Inhuman man ! curse on thy barb’rous art.”

See Poems.

Let me know how you like my poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one altogether.

C * * * is a glorious production of the Author of man. You, he, and the noble colonel of the C * * F * * * are to me

“ Dear as the ruddy drops which warm my breast.”

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of “ *Three guid fellows ayont the glen.*”

LXII.

TO MR. M'AULEY, OF DUMBARTON.

4th June, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I am not without my fears respecting my fate, at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin, which that arch vagabond, Satan, who I understand is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth, I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness, for which I remain, and from inability, I fear must still remain, your debtor; but, though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear, by my old acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy, that you are, in immortal Allan's language, "Hale and weel, and living;" and that your charming family are well, and promising to be an amiable and respectable addition to the company of performers, whom the great Manager of the drama of man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for *seasonable weather*, or holding an intrigue with the muses,

the only gipsies with whom I have no course. As I am entered into the matrimony, I trust my face is turned Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all to repeat no grievances, I hope the poetic licences of former days will be under the oblivious influence of some statute of celestial proscription. In devotion, which, like a good presbyterian, I always give to my household folks, I am fond of the psalm, "Let not the enemy triumph," &c., and that other, "Lo, God's heritage," &c.; in which last who, by the bye, has a glorious "woo" at either old song or psalmody, joins the pathos of Handel's Messiah.

* * * * *

LXIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 21st

DEAR MADAM,
WILL you take the effusions, the miseries of low spirits, just as they flow from the spring? I know not of any particular this worst of all my foes besetting me, the time my soul has been beclouded with an atmosphere of evil imaginations and presages!

* * * * *

Monday Evening.

I have just heard * * * * * give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him ; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord, deliver me ! Religion, my honoured friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensibly Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery, and consequent outward deportment, of this creature which he has made ; these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently, that I am an accountable creature ; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave—must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity, of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species ; therefore Jesus Christ was from God.

* * * * *

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness ;

and whatever injures society at large dual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, madam, of my conduct that I have said nothing that will let the eye of one whose good opinion I value to the approbation of my own mind.

LXIV.

TO MR. * * *.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE hurry of a farmer in this part and the indolence of a poet at all times, will, I hope, plead my excuse so long to answer your obliging letter of August.

That you have done well in quitting your anxious concern in * * * I do not doubt. The reasons you mention, were, I hope, well servedly indeed, weighty ones, and of great matter of the last importance : but your remaining proprietors of the paper have not done well, is what I much doubt. The * * * as I was a reader, exhibited such a high point, such an elegance of paragraph, such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly see how possible to continue a daily paper in this part of excellence ; but if there was a man with abilities equal to the task, that man's services the proprietors have lost.

* * * * *

When I received your letter, I was

for * * * *, my letter to the magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tomb-stone over poor Fergusson, and their edict in consequence of my petition, but now I shall send them to * * * * *. Poor Fergusson ! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is ; and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is ; thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man ; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-purchasing-powers, return to their native sordid matter ; where titles and honours are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream ; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and those thoughtless, though often destructive follies, which are the unavoidable aberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been !

Adieu, my dear sir ! So soon as your present views and schemes are concentrated in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you ; as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to

Yours, &c.

LXV.

TO MISS WILLIAMS.

1789.

MADAM,

OF the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature, Man, this is one of the most extraordinary, that he shall go on from day to day, from

excellent poem on the same - I am
that I am ! though the debts were
and the creditor a lady, I have
even the very acknowledgment
until you must indeed be the v
for, if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with t
I have a way, whenever I rea
book in our own trade, madam
when it is my own property,
and mark at the ends of verses,
and odd paper, little criticism:
disapprobation as I peruse also
apology for presenting you with
thoughts that occurred to me in
sals of your poem. I want to s
honesty enough to tell you wha
even when they are not quite o
better and better it is of

danger of stumbling through incautious speed, or
losing ground through loitering neglect,

I have the honour to be, &c.

LXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 6th September, 1789.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE mentioned, in my last, my appointment to the excise, and the birth of little Frank, who, by the bye, I trust, will be no discredit to the honourable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though, when he pleases, he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.

I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic, and part prosaic, from your poetess, Mrs. J. Little, a very ingenious but modest composition. I should have written her, as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and I am happy to add, always to the honour of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when

necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present.

* * * * *

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition that should equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort. A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least near four thousand years, have in some mode or other firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected that I was opposing the most ardent wishes, and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the Book of Job,

“Against the day of battle and of war”—
spoken of religion.

“ ‘Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
‘Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night.
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;

'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
 Disarms affliction, or repels his dart;
 Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
 Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies."

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*. The doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall, however, digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende!*

LXVII.

TO R. GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

9th December, 1789.

SIR,

I HAVE a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now—but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution, as if one should say, "You have found Mr. Graham a very powerful and kind friend indeed; and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns, you ought, by every thing in your power, to keep alive and cherish." Now though since God has thought proper to make one powerful and another helpless, the connexion of obliger and obliged is all fair; and though my being under your patronage is to me highly honourable, yet, sir, allow me to flatter myself, *that as a poet and an honest man, you first*

interested yourself in my welfare, and *principal* as such still, you permit me to approach you.

I have found the excise-business go on a great deal smoother with me than I expected ; owing a good deal to the generous friendship of Mr. Mitchell, my collector, and the kind assistance of Mr. Findlater, my supervisor. I dare to be honest, and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the Muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe to most of their acquaintance, like the visits of good angels, are short and far between : but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to enclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen captain Grose the antiquarian, you will enter into any humour that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper. Though I dare say you have none of the solemn-league-and-covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in lord George Gordon and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr. M'Gill, one of the clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man ! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter winds. The enclosed ballad on that business is, I confess, too local, but I laughed myself at some

conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.

The election ballad, as you will see, alludes to the present canvass in our string of boroughs. I do not believe there will be such a hard-run match in the whole general election.*

* * * * *

I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties; but a man who has it in his power to be the father of a country, and who * * * * * is a character that one cannot speak of with patience.

Sir J. J. does "what man can do," but yet I doubt his fate.

LXVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 13th December, 1789.

MANY thanks, dear madam, for your sheet full of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system; a system the state of which is most conducive to our happiness—or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have

* This alludes to the contest for the borough of Dumfries, between the duke of Queensbury's interest and that of Sir James Johnstone.

been so ill with a nervous head-ache, been obliged to give up for a time my ex- being scarcely able to lift my head, n ride once a week over ten muir parishe man? To-day in the luxuriance of heal in the enjoyment of existence; in a few haps in a few hours, loaded with conac being, counting the tardy pace of t moments by the repercussions of angu fusing or denied a comforter. Day fol and night comes after day, only to cur life which gives him no pleasure; and y dark termination of that life, is a s which he recoils.

“ Tell us, ye dead; will none of you in
Disclose the secret——

What 'tis you are, and we must short
———'tis no matter:

A little time will make us learn'd as yo

Can it be possible, that when I resi feverish being, I shall still find myself existence? When the last gasp of a nounced that I am no more to those me, and the few who loved me; wh stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is the earth, to be the prey of unsightly to become in time a trodden clod, st warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoyin

the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane : whatattering idea, then, is a world to come ! Would God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish

There I should meet an aged parent, now at a distance from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life ; the man who used to see me, because he loved me and would serve me—Muir ! thy weaknesses were the errations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly, and noble ; and every emanation from the All-good Being animated human form, it was thine !—There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my father, my ever dear Mary ! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love.

My Mary, dear departed shade !

Where is thy place of heavenly rest ?

Seest thou thy lover lowly laid ?

Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters ! I trust thou art no impostor, and that thy revelation of the awful scenes of existence beyond death and the hereafter, is not one of the many impositions which, from time to time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee “ shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” by being yet connected together in a better world, where every tie is bound heart to heart in this state of existence, and where, far beyond our present conceptions, more caring.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who

maintain, that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think ; and but to you I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathise with a diseased wretch, who is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl, which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire were he able to write any thing better, or indeed any thing at all.

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news of James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know ; as I promise you on the sincerity of a man who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honoured friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre misérable*.

R. B.

LXIX.

TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

SIR,

THE following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send it to you, because it is new, and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge is certainly of very great importance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and, besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddel, esq. of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddel got a number of his own tenants, and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance, or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings; and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, six-pence more. With their entry-money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood for that night first on the list, had his

choice of what volume he pleased in the
lection; the second had his choice after
the third after the second; and so on.
At next meeting, he who had been first
at the preceding meeting was last at this
had been second was first; and so on the
whole three years. At the expiration
gement, the books were sold by auction
among the members themselves; and
had his share of the common stock, in
books, as he chose to be a purchaser or

At the breaking up of this little society
was formed under Mr. Riddel's patronage
with benefactions of books from him,
with their own purchases, they had collected
ther upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes.
will easily be guessed, that a good deal
would be bought. Among the books, in
this little library, were, *Blair's Sermons*,
History of Scotland, *Hume's History of*
The Spectator, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*,
Observer, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*,
Don Quixote, *Joseph Andrews*, &c.
who can read and enjoy such books, is
much superior being to his neighbour
haps stalks beside his team, very little
except in shape, from the brutes he drives

Wishing your patriotic exertions their
merited success,

I am, sir, your humble servant,

A I


LXX.

TO CHARLES SHARPE, ESQ. OF HODDAM,

*Under a fictitious Signature, enclosing a Ballad, 1790
or 1791.*

It is true, sir, you are a gentleman of rank and fortune, and I am a poor devil: you are a feather in the cap of society, and I am a very hobnail in his shoes; yet I have the honour to belong to the same family with you, and on that score I now address you. You will perhaps suspect that I am going to claim affinity with the ancient and honourable house of Kilpatrick: No, no, sir: I cannot indeed be properly said to belong to any house, or even any province or kingdom; as my mother, who for many years was spouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this bad world, aboard the packet-boat, somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our common family, I mean, sir, the family of the Muses. I am a fiddler and a poet; and you, I am told, play an exquisite violin, and have a standard taste in the Belles Lettres. The other day, a brother cat-gut gave me a charming Scots air of your composition. If I was pleased with the tune, I was in raptures with the title you have given it; and, taking up the idea, I have spun it into the three stanzas enclosed. Will you allow me, sir, to present you them, as the dearest offering that a misbegotten son of poverty and rhyme has to give? I have a longing to take you by the hand and unburden my heart, by saying—"Sir, I ho-

"nour you as a man who supports the dignity of
"human nature, amid an age when frivolity and
"avarice have, between them, debased us below
"the brutes that perish!" But, alas, sir! to me
you are unapproachable. It is true, the Muses baptized me in Castalian streams, but the thoughtless gipsies forgot to give me a name. As the sex have served many a good fellow, the Nine have given me a great deal of pleasure, but, bewitching jades! they have beggared me. Would they but spare me a little of their cast-linen! were it only to put it in my power to say that I have a shirt on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solomon's lilies, "they
"toil not, neither do they spin;" so I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a cravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-coloured fragments. As to the affair of shoes, I have given that up. — My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes too, are what not even the hide of Job's Behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more: I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat indeed is a great favourite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of factotum servant to a country clergyman, where I picked up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on the



one side, and my fiddle-case on the other, and placing my hat between my legs, I can, by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the Conic Sections.

However, sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much forsaken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and, amid all my rags and poverty, I am as independent, and much more happy than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt; and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect. As you, sir, go through your rôle with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that, with the highest respect,

I have the honour to be, &c.

LXXI.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

Ellisland, 11th January, 1790.

DEAR BROTHER,

I MEAN to take advantage of the frank, though I have not, in my present frame of mind, much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a **** state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to ***! I'll fight it out and be off with it.

I gave -----
spouted to his audience with
I can no more.—If once I
farm, I should respire more

LXX

TO MRS.

EN
It has been owing to unwellness
that I have not written
now. My health is greatly
once more to share in
with the rest of my fellow

Many thanks, my mother,
your kind letters; but
the risk of being contemned
----- When I please

in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*, which you so much admire, is no more. After witnessing the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the *Aurora* frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honour of giving him birth, but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune. He was one of those daring adventurous spirits which Scotland, beyond any other country, is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander, and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart :

“ Little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die !”

Old Scottish songs are, you know, a favourite study and pursuit of mine ; and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female lamenting her fate. She concludes with this pathetic wish :

" O that my father had ne'er on me smiled;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung !
O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
But that I had died when I was young !

O that the grave it were my bed ;
My blankets were my winding sheet ;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a' ;
And O see sound as I should sleep !"

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love ; to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson * the small-pox. They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest, and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry until you are tired of it, next time I have the honour of assuring you how truly I am, &c.

* The bard's second son, Francis.

LXXIII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 13th February, 1790.

I BEG your pardon, my dear and much-valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

“ My poverty but not my will consents.”

But to make amends, since of modish post I have none, except one poor widowed half-sheet of gilt which lies in my drawer among my plebeian fools-cap pages, like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has driven from Burgundy and Pine-apple to a dish of Bohea, with the scandal-bearing help-mate of a village-priest; or a glass of whisky-toddy, with the ruby-nosed yoke-fellow of a foot-padding exciseman—I make a vow to enclose this sheet-full of epistolary fragments in that my only scrap of gilt paper.

I am indeed your unworthy debtor for three friendly letters. I ought to have written to you long ere now, but it is a literal fact, I have scarcely a spare moment: It is not that I *will not* write to you; Miss Burnet is not more dear to her guardian angel, nor his grace the duke of * * * * to the powers of * * * * than my friend Cunningham to me. It is not that I *cannot* write to you: should you doubt it, take the following fragment which *was intended* for you some time ago, and be con-

MY DEAR CORINNE
WHERE are you? And what
you be that son of levity who
as he takes up a fashion
other of the worthiest fel-
victim of indolence, laden
increasing weight?

What strange beings with
portion of conscious existence
enjoying pleasure, happily
suffering pain, wretched
surely worthy of an inquiry
such a thing as a science
economy, and fertility of
cable to enjoyment; an
want of dexterity in pl
little scantling of happi-
fuseness and intoxication
and sel

ing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow-creatures, seemingly diminutive in humbler stations, &c. &c.

Sunday, 14th February, 1790.

God help me! I am now obliged to join

“ Night to day, and Sunday to the week.”

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am * * * * past redemption, and what is worse, * * * * to all eternity. I am deeply read in *Boston's Four-fold State*, *Marshal on Sanctification*, *Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest*, &c.; but “ there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there,” for me; so I shall e'en turn Arminian, and trust to “ sincere though imperfect obedience.”

Tuesday, 16th.

Luckily for me I was prevented from the discussion of the knotty point at which I had just made a full stop. All my fears and cares are of this world: if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. I hate a man that wishes to be a deist; but, I fear every fair unprejudiced inquirer must in some degree be a sceptic. It is not that there are any very staggering arguments against the immortality of man; but, like electricity, phlogiston, &c. the subject is so involved in darkness, that we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much: that we are to live for ever, seems *too good news to be true*. That we are to enter into a new scene of existence, where, exempt

from want and pain, we shall enjoy ourselves and our friends without satiety or separation—how much should I be indebted to any one who could fully assure me that this was certain !

* * * * *

My time is once more expired. I will write to Mr. Cleghorn soon. God bless him and all his concerns ! And may all the powers that preside over conviviality and friendship be present with all their kindest influence, when the bearer of this, Mr. Syme and you meet ! I wish I could also make one. I think we should be * * *

Finally, brethren, farewell ! Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatsoever things are charitable, whatsoever things are kind think on these things, and think on

ROBERT BURNS.

LXXIV.

TO MR. HILL.

Ellisland, 2d March, 1790.

AT a late meeting of the Monkland Friend Society it was resolved to augment their library by the following books, which you are to send us as soon as possible : *The Mirror, the Lounger, Man of Feeling, Man of the World* (these, for my own sake, I wish to have by the first carrier), *Knox's History of the Reformation* ; *Ray's History of the Rebellion in 1715* ; any good *History of the Rebellion in 1745* ; *A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony*, by M

; *Hervey's Meditations*; *Beveridge's Thoughts*; another copy of *Watson's Body of Divinity*.

wrote to Mr. A. Masterton three or four months to pay some money he owed me into your ls, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my letter I want very much, *An Index to the Excise Laws*, and *An Abridgment of all the Statutes now in force relative to the Excise*, by Jellinger Symons; I want a few copies of this book: if it is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants, too, *A Family Library*, the larger the better, but second-handed, for he does not choose to give above ten shillings for a book. I want likewise for myself, as you can get them up, second-handed or cheap, copies of *Shakspeare's Dramatic Works*, *Ben Jonson's*, *Dryden's*, *Crève's*, *Wycherley's*, *Vanburgh's*, *Cibber's*, or *Farquhar's Dramatic Works* of the more modern, *Macklin*, *Rich*, *Foote*, *Colman*, or *Sheridan*. A good copy, too, of *Moliere*, in French, I much want. I want other good dramatic authors in that language as well; but comic authors chiefly, though I should wish to have *Racine*, *Corneille*, and *Voltaire*.

I am in no hurry for all, or any of these; but should be glad to accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend? and how is Mrs. Hill? I trust, if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, yet as *amiable*, and sings as *divinely* as ever.

My good wife, too, has a charming "wild;" now could we four —

* * * * *

I am out of all patience with this vile one thing. Mankind are by nature creatures: except in a few scoundrelly I do not think that avarice of the good chance to have, is born with us; but we here amid so much nakedness, and hu poverty, and want, that we are under a necessity of studying selfishness, in order to EXIST! Still there are, in every age, a that all the wants and woes of life can to selfishness, or even to the necessary caution and prudence. If ever I am in vanity, it is when I contemplate myself of my disposition and character. God kno no saint; I have a whole host of follies a answer for; but if I could, and I believe far as I can, I would wipe away all teari eyes. Adieu!

LXXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 10th A

I HAVE just now, my ever-honoured friend a very high luxury, in reading a paper *Lounger*. You know my national prejudice had often read and admired the *Spectator*

turer, Rambler, and World; but still with a certain regret, that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the union, that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence, and even her very name? I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

“ ——— states of native liberty possess'd,
Though very poor, may yet be very bless'd.”

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, “English ambassador, English court,” &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by “the Commons of England.” Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience such ideas as, “my country; her independence; her honour; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land;” &c. I believe these, among your *men of the world*, men who in fact guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrong-headedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead THE RABBLE; but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong, they only mean proper and improper, and their measure of conduct is, not what they OUGHT, but what they DARE. For the truth of this I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one of the *ablest men* that ever lived—the celebrated

earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interests, and who could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purposes, is, on the Stanhopian plan, the *perfect man*; a man to lead nations. But are great abilities, complete without a flaw, and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world*; but I call on honour, virtue, and worth, to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that, if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then* the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper*. Virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are, in that case, of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honour, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstasy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings and inharmonic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger*, No. 61, has cost me more honest tears than any thing I have read of a long time. M'Kenzie has been called the Addison of the Scots;

my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite ear, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and pathetic. His *Man of Feeling* (but I am unlearned in the laws of criticism), I esteem as the first performance in its kind I ever saw. What book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and clemency; in short, more of all that ennoble the soul to herself, or endears her to others—than in the simple affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of M'Kenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, madam, that among the few favoured of Heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are), there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree, absolutely disqualifying for the truly important business of making a man's way into life. If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend, A * * * *, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude; for I, a common acquaintance, or, as my vanity will have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy, or peculiarly miserable!

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise-business over, I hope to have more leisure to tran-

scribe any thing that may show how much I have the honour to be, Madam,

Yours, &c.

LXXVI.

TO DR. MOORE.

Dumfries, Excise-office, 14th July, 1790.

SIR,

COMING into town this morning, to attend my duty in this office, it being collection-day, I met with a gentleman who tells me he is on his way to London; so I take the opportunity of writing to you, as franking is at present under a temporary death. I shall have some snatches of leisure through the day, amid our horrid business and bustle, and I shall improve them as well as I can; but let my letter be as stupid as * * * * *, as miscellaneous as a newspaper, as short as a hungry grace-before-meat, or as long as a law paper in the Douglas cause; as ill-spelt as country John's billet-doux, or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byre-Macker's answer to it—I hope, considering circumstances, you will forgive it; and, as it will put you to no expense of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, *Zeteco*. In fact, you are in some degree blameable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work, which so flattered me, that nothing less would serve my overweening fancy.

a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have already planned a comparative view of you, Field-

Richardson, and Smollet, in your different abilities and merits as novel-writers. This, I own, says my ridiculous vanity, and I may probably bring the business to bear; but I am fond of spirit young Elihu shows in the Book of Job—and I said, I will also declare my opinion." I quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil, and marking with asterisks, parentheses, &c., wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkably well-turned period, or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I shall hardly think of fairly writing out "Comparative View," I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are.

I have just received from my gentleman, that old summons in the book of Revelations—"That time shall be no more!"

These little collection of sonnets have some charm-poetry in them. If *indeed* I am indebted to the author for the book, and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments, and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces. I would do so, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs. Hemans, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by.

LXXVII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

81

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER a long day's toil, plague, and ca
to write to you. Ask me not why I h
so long? It was owing to hurry, in
fifty other things; in short, to any thi
getfulness of *la plus aimable de son a*
bye, you are indebted your best court
this last compliment, as I pay it fro
conviction of its truth—a quality r
compliments of these grinning, bow
times.

Well, I hope writing to *you* will ea
troubled soul. Sorely has it been br
A ci-devant friend of mine, and an
quaintance of yours, has given my feeli
that I perceive will gangrene dange
cure. He has wounded my pride!

* * * * *

LXXVIII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 8th A

FORGIVE me, once dear, and ever de
seeming negligence. You cannot sit do
the busy life I lead.

I laid down my goose feather to be
for an apt simile, and had some thous

try grannum at a family christening; a bride on the market-day before her marriage; * * *
 * * * * *
 * * * * *; a tavern-keeper at an election-dinner; &c. &c.—but the resemblance that hits my fancy best, is that blackguard miscreant, Satan, who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I choose (and who would not choose) to blind down with the crampets of attention the brazen foundation of integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and, from its daring turrets, bid defiance to the storms of fate. And is not this a “consummation devoutly to be wished?”

“Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;

Lord of the lion-heart, and eagle-eye!

Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,

Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky!”

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of *Smollet's Ode to Independence*; if you have not seen the poem, I will send it to you. How wretched is the man that hangs on by the favours of the great! To shrink from every dignity of man, at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel glitter and stately hauteur, is but a creature, formed as thou art—and perhaps not so well formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant as thou didst, and must go out of it, as all men must, a naked corse.*

* * * * *

* The preceding letter explains the feelings under which this was written. The strain of indignant invective goes on some time longer in the style which our Bard was too apt to indulge, and of which the reader has already seen so much.

LXXIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

November, 1790.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow which I have received. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice,"—for me, *to sing* for joy, is no new thing; but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy—How could such a mercurial creature as a poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend? I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod, an instrument indispensably necessary in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker—out skipped I among the broomy banks of Nith, to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere compliment, to the sweet little fellow, than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses.*

I am much flattered by your approbation of my *Tam o' Shanter*, which you express in your former letter; though, by the bye, you load me in that said

* See the poem,—On the Birth of a Posthumous Child.

er with accusations heavy and many; to all
 ch I plead, *not guilty!* Your book is, I hear,
 the road to reach me. As to printing of poetry,
 n you prepare it for the press, you have only
 spell it right, and place the capital letters pro-
 y: as to the punctuation, the printers do that
 mselves.

have a copy of *Tam o' Shanter* ready to send
 by the first opportunity: it is too heavy to send
 post.

heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in conse-
 nce of your recommendation, is most zealous to
 re me. Please favour me soon with an account
 our good folks; if Mrs. H. is recovering, and the
 ng gentleman doing well.

LXXX.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 23d January, 1791.

ny happy returns of the season to you, my
 r friend! As many of the good things of this
 as is consistent with the usual mixture of good
 evil in the cup of being!

have just finished a poem, which you will re-
 ce enclosed. It is my first essay in the way
 ales.

have these several months been hammering at
 elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss
 net. I have got, and can get no farther than
 following fragment, on which please give me
 strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition
 great store by your opinion; but in sentimental

verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of Holy Father than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verse

"Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize," &c.

See Poem

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu!

LXXXI.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

17th January, 1779

TAKE these two guineas, and place them against that ***** account of yours! which gagged my mouth these five or six months! I as little write good things as apologies to the man who owes money to. O the supreme curse of man, that three guineas do the business of five! Not all labours of Hercules; not all the Hebrews' centuries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an ***** tax. Poverty! thou half-sister of death, thou companion of hell! where shall I find force of exertion equal to the amplitude of thy demerits? Oppressed by thee, the venerable ancient, grown hoarse in the practice of every virtue, laden with years of wretchedness, implores a little—little aid to support his existence, from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud; and is by him denied and insulted. Oppressed by thee, the man of sentiment, whose I

we with independence, and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes in bitterness of soul under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. Oppressed by thee, the son of genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the doors of the fashionable and polite, must see in offering silence his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow greatness, in his idiot tempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of worth that we reason to complain of thee: the children of folly and vice, though in common with thee the offering of evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education, is condemned as a fool for his inaptation, despised and shunned as a needy wretch, when his follies as usual bring him to want; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country. But far sorer is the lot of the man of family and fortune. His early follies and extravagance are spirit to a fire; his consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he has gained a legal commission to murder distant provinces, or massacre peaceful nations, he returns, perhaps, laden with the spoils of blood and murder; lives wicked and respected, and is a ***** and a lord.—Nay, worst of all, alas, the helpless woman! the needy prostitute, who has hovered at the corner of the street, waiting to earn her wages of casual prostitution, is left neglected and insulted, ridden down by the chariot wheels of

the coroneted RIF, hurrying on to the' guil-
nation; she who without the same neces-
plead, riots nightly in the same guilty track
Well! Divines may say of it what they
but execration is to the mind what phlebot-
the body: the vital sluices of both are now
relieved by their respective evacuations.

LXXXII. \

TO A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

SIR,

NOTHING less than the unfortunate accident
met with could have prevented my grateful
ledgments for your letter. His own favourit
and that an essay in a walk of the muses
new to him, where consequently his hopes
were on the most anxious alarm for his su
the attempt; to have that poem so much a
by one of the first judges, was the most
vibration that ever trilled along the hear
of a poor poet. However, Providence, to
the proper proportion of evil with the good
it seems is necessary in this sublunary state,
proper to check my exultation by a very seri
fortune. A day or two after I received you
my horse came down with me and broke
arm. As this is the first service my arm
me since its disaster, I find myself unab-
more than just in general terms to thank
this additional instance of your patron
friendship. As to the faults you detect

lece, they are truly there : one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out : as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly advance, it cannot easily be remedied.. Your approbation, sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honour to be, &c.

LXXXIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 7th Feb. 1791.

WHEN I tell you, madam, that by a fall, not from my horse, but with my horse, I have been a cripple some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing, you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better, and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease ; as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo. I had the honour of being pretty well acquainted with her, and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance, as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of *God's works* was no more. I have as yet *one no farther than the following fragment, of*

which please let me have your opinion. That that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, new idea on the business is not to be expected well if we can place an old idea in a new. How far I have succeeded as to this last, judge from what follows—

(Here follows the Elegy, adding this v

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and
So deck'd the woodbine sweet yon aged tree
So from it ravish'd, leaves it bleak and bare

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind remembrance your godson, came safe. This last, more scarcely what my pride can bear. As to my fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy of a long time seen. He is now seventeen old, has the small-pox and measles over several teeth, and yet never had a grain of drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the "lily-cret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and "mother-plant" is rather recovering her head. Soon and well may her "crown" be

LXXXIV.

TO LADY W. M. CONSTABLE.

Acknowledging a present of a valuable Snuff-box, with a fine picture of MARY, Queen of Scots, on the Lid.

MY LADY,
NOTHING less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm, could have prevented me, the moment I received your ladyship's elegant present by Mrs. Miller, from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your ladyship I shall set it apart: the symbols of religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your ladyship: when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary.

LXXXV.

TO MRS. GRAHAM, OF FINTRY.

MADAM,
WHETHER it is that the story of our Mary, Queen of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have in the enclosed ballad succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; *it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse*

for a good while past ; on that account I enc particularly to you. It is true, the purity of motives may be suspected. I am already deeply indebted to Mr. G——'s goodness ; and what, *usual ways of men*, is of infinitely greater import Mr. G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog ; and ever I may occasionally pick a better bone used to do, I know I must live and die poor ; will indulge the flattering faith that my poet considerably outlive my poverty ; and, without fustian affectation of spirit, I can promise and that it must be no ordinary craving of the shall ever make me do any thing injurious honest fame of the former. Whatever may failings, for failings are a part of human nature may they ever be those of a generous heart independent mind ! It is no fault of mine was born to dependence ; nor is it Mr. G. chiefest praise that he can command influence it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother, but with the politeness of a gentleman ; and I trust it shall be mine to receive thankfulness, and remember with undiminished gratitude.

LXXXVI.

TO THE REV. G. BAIRD.

Why did you, my dear sir, write to me in a hesitating style, on the business of poor B ? Don't I know, and have I not felt the many times peculiar fits, that poetic flesh is heir to ?

have your choice of all the unpublished poems
re; and had your letter had my direction so as
ve reached me sooner (it only came to my hand
moment) I should have directly put you out of
hse on the subject. I only ask that some pre-
y advertisement in the book, as well as the sub-
tion-bills, may bear, that the publication is
r for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would
at it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or
e to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the
from mercenary motives. Nor need you give
edit for any remarkable generosity in my part
: business. I have such a host of peccadilloes,
gs, follies, and backslidings (any body but my-
night perhaps give some of them a worse ap-
-lon), that by way of some balance, however
ig, in the account, I am fain to do any good
ccurs in my very limited power to a fellow-
are, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a
the vista of retrospection.

* * * * *

LXXXVII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Ellisland, 28th February, 1791.

not know, sir, whether you are a subscriber
ose's *Antiquities of Scotland*. If you are, the
sed poem will not be altogether new to you.
sin Grose did me the favour to send me a dozen
s of the proof-sheet, of which this is one.
ld you have read the piece before, still this will
r the principal end I have in view; it will give

me another opportunity of thanking you for all goodness to the rustic bard; and also of showing you, that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronise, are still employed in the way you wish.

The *Elegy on Captain Henderson* is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have this the same advantage as Roman Catholics; they can be of service to their friends after they have that bourn where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I think, a very problematical: but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and, as a very orthodox text, I forget where in Scripture, says, "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin;" so say I, whatsoever is detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment to the soul of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankfulness and delight. As almost all my religious tenets emanate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea, that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still with the dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary was begun when I was busy with *Percy's Reliques of English Poetry*. By the way, how much is every honest heart, who has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice, obliged to you for your glorious story of Buchanan and Targe. 'Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving Targe the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.

* * * * *

I have just read over once more of many times, your *Zeluco*. I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one, or two I think, which with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson indeed might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world; and however they may captivate the inexperienced romantic fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper minds.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the earl of Glencairn, the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence: so soon as the prince's friends had got in (and every dog, you know, has his day), my getting forward in the excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though *this was a consummation* devoutly to be wished, yet *thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and*

as to my boys, poor little fellows ! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life as I could wish, I shall, if I am favoured so much of the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors, this is one of the best, *Better be the head o' the commonalty, as the tale o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject, which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you ; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page, and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honour to be yours, &c.

* * * * *

Written on the blank leaf of a book which I presented to a very young lady whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of *The Rees-bud*.

LXXXVIII.

TO THE REV. ARCH. ALISON.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 14th Feb. 1791.

SIR,

You must, by this time, have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honour to present me with a book which does honour to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame

for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up, forsooth, a deep-learned digest of strictures, on a composition, of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, sir, that, at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle twangle of a jews-harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twigg, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all association of ideas;—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith.—In short, sir, except *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evenings of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas as your "*Essays on the Principles of Taste*." One thing, sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon merit in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I enclose you some poetic bagatelles of composition. The one in print is my first way of telling a tale.

I am,

LXXXIX.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

12th Ma

If the foregoing piece be worth your let me have them. For my own part, as I have just composed always appears a double portion of that partial medium in author will ever view his own works. In general, novelty has something in it that the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates away like other intoxication, and poor patient, as usual, with an aching striking instance of this might be adduced revolution of many a hymeneal honey-moon lest I sink into stupid prose, and so sacrilegiously trude on the office of my parish priest, up the page in my own way, and give you song of my late composition, which will perhaps in Johnson's work as well as in

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you will oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to "the memory of joys that are past!" to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

"That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane."

So, good night to you! Sound be your sleep, and delectable your dreams! — A-propos, how do you like this thought in a ballad I have just now on the tapis?

I look to the west when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;
For far in the west is he I lo'e best,
The lad that is dear to my babie and me!

Good night, once more, and God bless you!



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THE
LETTERS
OF
ROBERT BURNS.
VOL. II.



LONDON.
PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHAPE, PICCADILLY
1829



LETTERS
OF
ROBERT BURNS.

XC.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 11th April, 1791.

once more able, my honoured friend, to re-
you, with my own hand, thanks for the many
nces of your friendship, and particularly for
kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil
is had in store for me. However, life is che-
ed—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morn-
ast, Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine
rather stouter, but not so handsome as your
on was at his time of life. Indeed I look on
little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in
species of manufacture, as I look on *Tam o'*
ster to be my standard performance in the
cal line. 'Tis true both the one and the other
ver a spice of roguish waggery that might,
ps, be as well spared: but then they also

show, in my opinion, a force of genius, and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale sprightly damsels, that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is, indeed, such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation, and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven, I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such a humble one as mine; we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence—as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspecting of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return: these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution,

which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do let me hear, by first post, how *cher petit Monsieur* comes on with his small-pox. May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him !

XCI.

TO

DEAR SIR,

I AM exceedingly to blame in not writing you long ago ; but the truth is, that I am the most indolent of all human beings ; and when I matriculate in the herald's office, I intend that my supporters shall be two sloths, my crest a slow-worm, and the motto, " Deil tak the foremost !" So much by way of apology for not thanking you sooner for your kind execution of my commission.

I would have sent you the poem : but somehow or other it found its way into the public papers, where you must have seen it.

* * * * *

I am ever, dear sir, yours sincerely,

ROBERT BURNS.

LET me interest you, my dear C
 half of the gentleman who waits
 He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat
 master there, and is at present
 under the * * * of one or two
 duals of his employers. He is
 to * * * that were placed under
 the teacher, if a man of sensibility
 such is my friend Clarke, who
 sends him with his booby son, &
 up the rays of science in a fellow
 is impervious and inaccessible
 a positive fracture with a cut
 in fact, it savours of impiety
 scholar of. as he has been r

ing very nearly related, and whom this age have had the honour to produce. name the historian of Charles V.* I rough the medium of his nephew's int Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will even his patronage. I know the merits thoroughly, and say it, that my friend sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and od help the children of dependence! persecuted by their enemies, and too almost unexceptionably, received by s with disrespect and reproach, under guise of cold civility and humiliating to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the is independence, amid the solitary deserts; rather than in civilized life, tremble for a subsistence, precarious as of a fellow-creature! Every man has and no man is without his failings; and t-privileged plain-dealing of friendship, he hour of my calamity, cannot reach elping hand, without at the same time f those failings, and apportioning them in procuring my present distress. My such the world calls ye, and such ye elves to be, pass by my virtues if you lo, also, spare my follies: the first will ny breast for themselves, and the last enough to the ingenuous mind without since deviating more or less from the priety and rectitude must be incident

bertson was uncle to Mr. Cunningham.

Clarke, to your acquaintance
worth entitles him to the
merit the other. I lo
Adieu !

X

TO THE EARL

My LORD,
LANGUAGE sinks under
when I would thank you
you have done me in in
the coronation of the b
first enthusiasm in reading
honour to write to me, I
and determine

owning his bust. I shall trouble your lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am sure, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task.* However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honour to be, &c.

* * * * *

XCIV.

TO LADY E. CUNNINGHAM.

MY LADY,

COULD, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my benefactor, I determined to make that the first piece I should do myself the honour of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardour of my heart, the enclosed had been much more worthy your perusal: as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your ladyship's feet. As all the world knows my obligations to the late earl of Glencairn, I would wish to show as openly that my heart glows, and will ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his lordship's goodness. The same I did myself the honour to wear to his lordship's memory, were not the "mockery of woe." nor shall my gratitude perish with me!—If, among

poem may . . .
some way or other, give it to

XCV.

TO MR. AINSIE

MY DEAR AINSIE,
CAN you minister to a mind
amid the horrors of penitence
head-ache, nausea, and all
hounds of hell, that beset
been guilty of the sin of
speak peace to a troubled sinner

Miserable perdu that I
thing that used to amuse
must I sit, a monument to

the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow.—When I tell you even * * * has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within, and all around me.—I began *Elibanks* and *Elibraes*, but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue ; at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours that lay by me in my book-case, and I felt something, for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.—Well—I begin to breathe a little, since I began to write you. How are you ? and what are you doing ? How goes law ? A-propos, for connexion's sake, do not address to me supervisor, for that is an honour I cannot pretend to—I am on the list, as we call it, for a supervisor, and will be called out by and by to act as one ; but at present I am a simple gauger, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of 25*l. per ann.* better than the rest. My present income, down money, is 70*l. per ann.*

* * * * *

I have one or two good fellows here whom you would be glad to know.

* * * * *

XCVI.

TO MISS DAVIES.

It is impossible, madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind can have any idea of that moral disease under which I un-

could have made me so for
commands. Indeed I had
telle was not worth present
am I interested in Miss D*
the serious business of life
changes; that to make he
ballad, is downright mo
feelings; 'tis like an impe
friend.

Gracious Heaven! why th
wishes and our powers? W
wish to make others blest, i
—as the idle breeze that
sert? In my walks of life
people to whom how gladl
“Go, be happy! I know tha
wounded by the scorn of the
has placed above you—or

BURNS'S LETTERS.

Why, dear madam, must I wake from
 lightful reverie, and find it all a dream;
 amid my generous enthusiasm, must I
 poor and powerless, incapable of wiping
 from the eye of pity, or of adding one
 to the friend I love?—Out upon the world
 that its affairs are administered so ill! To
 reform;—good Heaven! what a reform
 to make among the sons, and even the daugh-
 ters!—Down, immediately, should go
 the high places where misbegotten chance
 haunts them up, and through life should they
 be haunted by their native insignificance, a
 march accompanied by its shadow.—As
 more formidable class, the knaves, I do not
 know what to do with them:—had I a world, I
 would not be a knave in it.

* * * *

But the hand that could give, I would
 fill; and I would pour delight on the
 could kindly forgive and generously love

Still, the inequalities of life are, as
 comparatively tolerable—but there is a
 tenderness, accompanying every view in
 can place lovely Woman, that are grated
 on at the rude, capricious distinctions
 Woman is the blood-royal of life: let
 slight degrees of precedency among them
 them be ALL sacred.—Whether this last
 be right or wrong, I am not accountable
 original component feature of my mind.

MANY thanks to you, madam
respecting the little floweret
I hope my poetic prayers have
been answered up to the way
fullest extent ; and then Mr
little darling the represent
in every thing but his abrid

I have just finished the f
a lady the descendant of W
of his truly illustrious lin
ther of several soldiers, n
apology.

“ Farewell thou fair day, tho

brunk into a modest crescent, just peeping
at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to trans-
fer you. *A Dieu je vous commende !*

XCVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

5th January, 1794.

See my hurried life, madam ; I can only com-
mence starts of time : however, I am glad of one
; since I finished the other sheet, the political
that threatened my welfare is overblown. I
corresponded with commissioner Graham, for
ward had made me the subject of their animad-
versions ; and now I have the pleasure of informing
that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now
these informers, may the devil be let loose to
but hold ! I was praying most fervently in my
sheet, and I must not so soon fall a swearing
is.

as ! how little do the wantonly or idly officious
: what mischief they do by their malicious in-
tentions, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless
ings ! What a difference there is in intrinsic
h, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness
all the charities and all the virtues, between
class of human beings and another ! For in-
e, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in
ospitable hall of D * * *, their generous hearts
sir uncontaminated dignified minds—their in-
ad and polished understandings—what a con-

XCIX.

WILLIAM SMELLIE, PRINTER.

Dumfries, 22d January, 1792.

My dear sir, to introduce a young lady
lady in the first rank of fashion, too.
to you — who care no more for the
s called young ladies, than you do for

the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems industrious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foreground of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs. Riddel, who will take this letter to town with her, and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady too is a votary of the muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge in my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady-poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book; and, hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was, to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craigdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing: a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will as easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself;—where she dislikes or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it, than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning com-

walk to an honest grave,
say, ' Here lies a man who d
and men of worth shall say,
did honour to human nature

C.

TO MR. W.

O THOU, wisest among the
prudence, full moon of disc
counsellors ! How infinite
rattled-headed, wrong-hea
indebted to thy superemin
the luminous path of thy
thou lookest benignly down

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, when shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills? * As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of calumny blur the fair page of his reputation, nor the bolt of hatred fly at his dwelling.

* * * * *

Thou mirror of purity, when shall the elfine lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers?—As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heaven-bound desires: never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life! like thine the tenor of my conversation! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness! then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid.—May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for, O thou lamp of wisdom and mirror of morality! thy devoted slave.†

* Mr. Nicol.

† This strain of irony was excited by a letter of Mr. Nicol, containing good advice.

SINCE I wrote to you
have not had time to
say that I had not time,
the three demons, indolence
have so completely shrouded
as not to leave me a five
up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel now
with the rejuvenating year
earnest take up Thomson.
thinks I have used him
with too much appearance
Do you know the much-
called *The Tutor's Daughter*
rite of mine, and I have written
of my best songs to it.
was sung with great applau
circles by Major Robertson
which . . .

ness ? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all : but I have invented arms for myself, so you know I shall be chief of the name ; and, by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These, however, I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald, and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly bush, seeded, proper, in base ; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colours, a wood-lark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes : round the top of the crest, *Wood notes wild* ; at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, *Better a wee bush than nae bield*. By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters of Arcadia, but a *Stock and Horn*, and a *Club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the *Gentle Shepherd*. By the bye, do you know Allan ? He must be a man of very great genius—Why is he not more known ?—Has he no patrons ? or do "Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy" on him ? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of that noblest pastoral in the world ; and dear as it was, I mean, dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it, but I was told that it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* pastoral *costume*. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and harden the heart so ? I think, that were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day ; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than any other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a

and cherish unprotected merit, and
and celebrity of that merit will richly

• • • •

CII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Annan Water Foot, 22d /

Do not blame me for it, Madam—
science, hackneyed and weather-beate
watching and reproving my vagaries,
lence, &c. has continued to blame and
sufficiently.

• • • •

Do you think it possible, my dear a
friend, that I could be so lost to gratiti
favours; to esteem for much worth;
honest kind pleasant

A-propos! (though how it is à-propos, I have not leisure to explain.) Do you know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours? Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know, then, that the heart-struck awe, the distant humble approach, the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home, among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other-day with Miss L * * B * * *, your neighbour at M * * * *. Mr. B. with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H * * * of G * * * *, passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honour of calling on me; on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time), and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and, riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with—

So much for ballads. I regret
to the east country, as I am
about a fortnight. This world
standing it has many good things
ever had this curse, that two
would be the happier the often
ther, are, almost without ex-
placed as never to meet but on
which, considering the few years
is a very great "evil under the
not recollect that Solomon has
catalogue of the miseries of man-
lieve that there is a state of ex-
grave, where the worthy of this
their former intimacies, with the
tion, that "we meet to part no

BURNS'S LETTERS.

some courteous ghost would blab it out!" cannot be; you and I, my friend, must make experiment by ourselves, and for ourselves. ever, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary for making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that my little godson, and every little creature that shall be my father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written in this wild place of the world, in the interval of my labour of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua.

CHII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Dumfries, 10th Sept.

No! I will not attempt an apology. Amid the hurry of business, grinding the faces of the pious and the sinner on the merciless wheels of trade; making ballads, and then drinking, and writing them; and, over and above all, the corresponding press-work of two different publications, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures to what I might have done, as I do at present, snatch an hour near "witching time of night," and scribble a page or two. I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage; or I might have thanked the Caledonian archers for the honour they had done me (though to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done

BURNS'S LETTERS.

long ere now). Well, then, here is to your good health! for you must know I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me, just by way of spell, to keep away the meikled-horned deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly round.

But what shall I write to you? "The voice said, Cry!" and I said, "What shall I cry?" O, thou spirit! whatever thou art, or wherever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the faulde! Be thou a brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose! Be thou a kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry, in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling boat! Or, lastly, be thou a ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent ghastly dwellings of the dead around thee; or taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, portraying on his dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity! Come, thou spirit! but not in these horrid forms: come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations which thou breathest round the wig of a

prating advocate, or the tête of a tea-sipping gossip, while their tongues run at the light horse gallop of clish-maclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half an hundred words ; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark, worth putting pen to paper for.

I feel, I feel the presence of supernatural assistance ! circled in the embrace of my elbow-chair, my breast labours like the bloated Sibyl on her three-footed stool, and like her too, labours with Nonsense. Nonsense, auspicious name ! Tutor, friend, and finger-post in the mystic mazes of law ; the cadaverous paths of physic ; and particularly in the sightless soarings of SCHOOL DIVINITY, who, leaving Common Sense confounded at his strength of pinion, Reason, delirious with eyeing his giddy flight ; and Truth creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour that ever she offered her scorned alliance to the wizard power of Theologic Vision—raves abroad on all the winds. “ On earth, Discord ! a gloomy Heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen thousandth part of the tithe of mankind ! and below, an inescapable and inexorable Hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals !!! ” O doctrine ! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man ! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres misérables*, to whom day brings no pleasure, and night yields no rest, be comforted. “ ’Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world : ” so, alas ! the *experience of the poor and the needy too often*

affirms; and, 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to one but the dogmas of * * * *, that you will be damned eternally in the world to come!

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illeberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful; but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow-creatures, with a nostril-snuffing putrescence, and a foot-spurning filth; in short, with a conceited dignity that your titled * * * * or any other of your Scottish lordlings of seven centuries standing, display when they accidentally mix among the many-aproned sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys! Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a * * * *!—But hold—Here's t'ye again—this rum is generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

A-propos! How do you like, I mean *really* like, the married life? Ah! my friend, matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love-sick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of his institutions. I am a husband of older standing than you, and shall give you *my* ideas of the conjugal state (*en passant*, you know I am no Latinist: is not *conjugal* derived from

jugum, a yoke?) Well, then, the scale of good wifeship I divide into ten parts:—Good-nature, four; Good Sense, two; Wit, one; Personal Charms, viz. a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage (I would add a fine waist too, but that is so soon spoilt you know), all these, one; as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on a wife, such as Fortune, Connexions, Education (I mean education extraordinary), Family Blood, &c., divide the two remaining degrees among them as you please; only remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any one of them, in the aforesaid scale, entitled to the dignity of an *integer*.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—how I lately met with Miss L * * * * B * * * *, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—how I accompanied her and her father's family fifteen miles on their journey out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God, in such an unequalled display of them—how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which these two stanzas made a part—

Thou, bonnie L * * *, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonnie L * * *, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very Deil he could na scathe
Whatever wad belang thee!
He'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, ' I canna wrang thee !'

—Behold all these things are written in the chro-

nicles of my imaginations, and shall be read by thee, my dear friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee, and to thy before-designed *bosom*-companion, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the benigne influences of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life, for ever and ever! Amen!

CIV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 16th Sept. 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak the hindmost," is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me. You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers, to approve or reject,

at your pleasure, for your own publication. A-propos! if you are for *English* verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. *Tweedside! Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate! Ah! Cloris could I now but sit, &c.* you cannot mend; but such insipid stuff as, *To Fanny fair could I impart, &c.*, usually set to *The Mill, Mill O*, is a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself at least think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c. would be downright *prostitution of soul!* A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, “Gude speed the wark!”

I am, Sir,
Your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

P.S. I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible.

" Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?"

Galla Water, and *Auld Rob Morris*, I most probably be the next subject of my
However, even on *my verses*, speak out criticisms with equal frankness. My wish stand aloof, the uncomplying bigot of o but cordially to join issue with you in the
ance of the work.

* It is not necessary to refer the reader in f
Songs. In the Letters to Mr. Thomson the f
the songs enclosed by the author will only be g

let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at, in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one-half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my *Nanie O*, the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it,

“ Behind yon hills where *Lugar* flows,” &c.

See *Songs*.

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but *Lugar* is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I will soon give you a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl, free of postage, an expense that it is ill able to pay: so, with my best compliments to honest Allan, Good be wi' ye, &c.

Friday night.

* * * *

Saturday morning.

As I find I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away, I will give you *Nanie O* at length.*

Your remarks on *Ewe-bughts*, *Marion*, are just: still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish Songs; and what, with many beauties

* See *Songs*.

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified, as to seeing me, when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs. B * * * until her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as to let me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to show a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor; a girl should always have a fortune. A-propos! your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart: you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

CVII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

*Supposed to have been written on the Death of
Mrs. H * * *, her Daughter.*

I HAD been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much afflicted friend! I can but grieve with you; consolation I

have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction — *Children of affliction*! — how just the expression! and like every other family, they have matters among them, which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, madam! who would wish for many years? What is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire, and leave us in a night of misery; like the gloom which blots out the stars one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste!

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

CVIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

November 8th, 1792.

If you mean, my dear sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find more difficulty in the undertaking than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythm in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the *feature notes* of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, *My wife's a wanton wee thing*, if a few lines smooth and pretty can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. The following were

made extempore to it; and though, *on farther*
I might give you something more *profound*
might not suit the light-horse gallop of the
well as this random clink.

"She is a winsome wee thing," &c.

I have just been looking over the *Collier's*
Dochter; and if the following rhapsody, w
composed the other day, on a charming A
girl, Miss * * *, as she passed through thi
to England, will suit your taste better th
Collier Lassie, fall on and welcome.

"O saw ye bonnie Lesley," &c.

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, m
thetic airs, until more leisure, as they wil
and deserve, a greater effort. However, th
all put into your hands, as clay into the h
the potter, to make one vessel to honour, a
other to dishonour. Farewell, &c.

CIX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

WITH "HIGHLAND MARY."

"Ye banks, and braes, and streams around,"

14th November,

MY DEAR SIR,

I AGREE with you that the song, *Katharine* (t
very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether i
thy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend

the awkward sound *Ogie* recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart, that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of *Auld Rob Morris*. I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu! &c.

CX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 1st Dec. 1792.

YOUR alterations of my *Nanie O* are perfectly right. So are those of *My wife's a wanton wee thing*. Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear sir, with the freedom which characterizes our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter *Bonnie Lesley*. You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime

made sic anither." However,
make it either way. "Cale
you, is not so good a word
though it is sanctioned in the
Allan Ramsay: but I cannot but
species of stanza is the most
ever tried.

'The *Lea-rig* is as follows.
*the two first stanzas, as before
in addition.)*

The hunter lo'es the morn
To rouse the mountain
At noon the fisher seeks
Along the burn to stee
Gie me the hour o' gloam
It maks my heart sae
To meet thee on the lea
My ain kind dearie, C

CXI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

WITH "AULD ROB MORRIS."

"There's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen," &c.

AND "DUNCAN GRAY."

"Duncan Gray cam here to woo," &c.

4th December, 1792.

THE foregoing I submit, my dear sir, to your better judgment. Acquit them, or condemn them, as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

CXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 6th Dec. 1792.

I SHALL be in Ayrshire, I think, next week ; and, if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much-esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-House.

Alas, madam ! how seldom do we meet in this world, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness ! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet, I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper, that I do not see some names that I have known,

ifferent individuals. . . .
one period of the same life me
few years ago, I could have l
"careless of the voice of the
not a few, and these most
would, on losing me and my
their "staff and shield." B
less ones have lately got an
having given me a fine girl
There is a charming passage
and Eleonora —

"The valiant *in himself*, wh
Or what need he regard his

As I am got in the way of c
you another from the same p
too peculiarly apposite, my
present frame of mind :

sive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favourite one, from his *Alfred* :

“ Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life : to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.”

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination ; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another ; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is religion — speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says,

“ ’Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright.”

I see you are in for a double postage, so I shall e’en scribble out t’other sheet. We, in this country here, have many alarms of the reforming, or rather the republican spirit, of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am a *placeman*, you know ; a very humble one indeed, heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter.

• • • • •

I have taken up the subject in another view, and the other day, for a pretty actress’s benefit night, I

claims in person at I

TO M

" O Poortith cau

AND " G

" There's braw braw

MANY returns of the
How comes on your p
foregoing be of any serv
know what songs you pr
verse to

the *The Rights of Woman*
Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things

have the honour of receiving you
on at Danlop.

CXIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

WITH

"bold, and restless love," &c.

"LLA WATER."

"on Yarrow banks," &c.

Jan 25

to you, my dear

will these

I should like

each time beside

with

you

the

the

of the

TO MR. T

I APPROVE greatly, my dear
Beattie's essay will of
my part, I mean to do
Doctor's essay, contain
&c. of our Scots song
anecdotes I have by me
of my acquaintance with
I am such an enthusiast
several peregrination
pilgrimage to the in
song took its rise; I
lenden, excepted.
the title of the air,
be ascertained, I have
ticular shrine of every

I do not doubt
able collection of
no offence? In the
some of them, perhaps
as an air, with a
place in your collection

If it were possible
would be proper to
every air, and
notes ought to be
simplicity, in
and phraseology

to my taste, and I will add to every genuine *Caledonian* taste) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His *Gregory* is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has I think more of the ballad simplicity in it.

"O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour," &c.

My most respectful compliments to the honourable gentleman who favoured me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and receive his MSS. soon.

CXV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

WITH "MARY MORISON."

"O Mary, at thy window be," &c.

20th March, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it in your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stunted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c. of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by-and-by. I have always looked upon myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot bear rivalry from you, nor any body else.

CXVI.

TO MISS B****, OF YORK.

21st March, 1793.

MADAM,

AMONG many things for which I envy those hale, long-lived old fellows before the flood, is this in particular, that when they met with any body after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now, in this short, stormy, winter day of our fleeting existence, when you now and then, in the Chapter of Accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you, that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill-run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turnings, and jostlings of life, pop, at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's re-

ings of...
well known that
ay of taking down
doubt that he is per-
iments respecting
ed her abilities, and
fortunate I thought
or this last reason,
tain no hopes of the
with you again.
he is sending a packet
end you the enclosed
he real truth, the son-
I may have the oppor-
much respectful esteem

II.

THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

, for your packet. You can-
this business of composing
as added to my enjoyments.
attachment to ballads, your
aking is now as completely
ever fortification was Uncle
anter it away till I come to the
God grant that I may take the
ning post!) and then cheerfully
e honest folks with whom I have

This

Bar
Osin
z me
you

Ha
me
to

happy, I shall say or sing, "Sae merry as we e been!" and raising my last looks to the whole an race, the last words of the voice of *Coila** be, "Good night and joy be wi' you a'!" So h for my last words: now for a few present re- as, as they have occurred at random on looking your list.

the first lines of *The last time I came o'er the*; and several other lines in it, are beautiful; in my opinion — pardon me, revered shade Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I'll try to *make or mend*. *For ever, Fortune, wilt prove*, is a charming song! but *Logan burn Logan braes*, are sweetly susceptible of rural poetry: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the r song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse, in some of old songs of *Logan Water* (for I know a good y different ones) which I think pretty.

"Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes," &c.†

My Pattie is a lover gay, is unequal. "His mind ever muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"Then I'll resign, and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony."—

his is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your

Burns here calls himself the *Voice of Coila*, in imitation of Ramsay, who denominates himself the *Voice of Cona*. *Merry as we a' hae been*; and *Good night and joy be wi' a'*, are the names of two Scottish tunes.

He was mistaken in supposing it to be a song of the a time; it is the production of Mr. John Mayne.

friend Mr. Erskine will take
deration.—In Sir J. Sincl
are two claims, one, I thin
and the other from Ayrshi
song. The following are
the present sir William
land, who had it of the la
I can, on such authorities

Allan Ramsay was resid
the then earl, father to
noon, riding or walking
and Allan passed a sweet
water, still called "Pat
lass was "tedding hay,
My lord observed to All
theme for a song. Ram
gering behind, he comp
which he produced at di

pretty, follow, as an English set. *The Banks of the Dee*, is, you know, literally *Langolee*, to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it : for instance,

“ And sweetly the nightingale sung from the tree.”

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree ; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen or heard, on the banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to *The small birds rejoice*, &c., I do myself honestly avow, that I think it a superior song. *John Anderson my jo*—the song to this tune in Johnson's Museum, is my composition, and I think it not my worst : if it suit you, take it, and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs, is, in my opinion, very complete ; but not so your comic ones. Where are *Tullochgorum*, *Lumps o' puddin*, *Tibbie Fowler*, and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation ? There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called *Craigieburn Wood* ; and, in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of the sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it : and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. *Shepherds, have lost my love !* is to me a heavenly air—what

Mr. Erskine's song
Vale is divine.

Let me know just
hints.

TO ME

I HAVE yours, my dear
answer it and your fo
way of saying whateve
The business of man
beginning, what fiddler
a rub to us poor rhyme

trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point, you are a complete judge ; but there is a quality more necessary than either, in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity : now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces ; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with *The last time I came o'er the moor*. Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own ; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever, in the dark and narrow house ; by Heaven 'twould be sacrilege ! I grant that Mr. W.'s version is an improvement ; but I know Mr. W. well, and esteem him much ; let him mend the song, as the Highlander mended his gun ;—he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not by this object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in *The lass o' Patie's Mill* must be left out : the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with *Corn rigs are bonnie*. Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. *Could hail in Aberdeen* you must leave with me yet awhile. I have vowed to have a song to that air, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, *Poor-tith could and restless love*. At any rate my other song, *Green grow the rushes*, will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name, which of course

would mar the progress of you
Your book will be the standard
the future : let this idea ever keep
the alarm.

I send a song, on a celebratory
try, to suit *Bonnie Dundee*. I
to the *Mill mill O*.*

The last time I came o'er the
attempt to make a Scots song
be the English set. ' You shall
When you go to London on the
come by Dumfries ? I have still
airs by me which I have picked
singing of country lasses. 'Th
but your learned *lugs*† would
with the very feature for which
them simple ; you would pronounce
you know a fine air called *Jac*
I have a song of considerable note
enclose you both the song and
ready to send to Johnson's *Mu*
likewise, to me, a beautiful li
taken down from *viva voce*.

* The ballad to the *Mill mill O*,

" When wild war's deadly bl

† Ears.

‡ The song here mentioned, is, *O
Mill has gotten?* This song is sure
though he does not generally praise

CXIX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAD scarcely put my last letter into the post-office, when I took up the subject of *The last time I came o'er the moor*, and, ere I slept, drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one *note* of the original Scottish airs: I mean in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

CXX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

June, 1793.

WHEN I tell you, my dear sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these accursed times, you will easily allow

that it might unhinge me for doing any ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary trifling; but the total ruin of a much- is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines *mill O*. What you think a defect, I positive beauty; so you see how do I shall now, with as much alacrity as I go on with your commands.

You know Frazer, the hautboy play burgh—he is here, instructing a band a fencible corps quartered in this count many of his airs that please me, there known as a reel, by the name of *The Qu* and which I remember a grand aunt c to sing, by the name of *Liggeram Cosi mee lass*. Mr. Frazer plays it slow, a expression that quite charms me. I bec enthusiast about it, that I made a song I here subjoin; and enclose Frazer's tune. If they hit your fancy, they are vice; if not, return me the tune, and in Johnson's Museum. I think the so my worst manner.

“Blithe hae I been on yon hill,”

I should wish to hear how this pleas

CXXI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

25th June, 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from, still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollected the air of *Logan Water*; and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer; and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow chair, ought to have some merit.

"O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide," &c.

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment in Witherspoon's collection of Scots songs?

Air—"Hughie Graham."

"O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa';
And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

D 2

BURNS'S LETTERS.

beyond expression blest'd,
on beauty a' the night :
her silk-cast limbs to rest,
I'd see by Phœbus' light."

It is inexpressibly beautiful; and
I know, original. It is too short
I would forswear you altogether,
to it a place. I have often tried to
miss five minutes, on the hind-legs
chair, I produced the following.
s are far inferior to the foregoing, I
ise; but if worthy of insertion at all,
be first in place; as every poet, who
thing of his trade, will husband his best
or a concluding stroke.

were my love you like fair,
WT purple blossoms to the spring;
ad I, a bird to shelter there,
When wearied on my little wing:

How I wad mourn, when it was torn
By autumn wild, and winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youths' May its bloom renew'd.

CXXII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

July 2d, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,
I HAVE just finished the following ballad, and, as I
think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr.

ASSURE you, my
th your pecuniary
eyes. Howe
tation; but as
creditor kin
tows the up
TEGRITY—or
antly spurn
mom
BURNS'S

Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns's *wood-note wild*, is very fond of it, and has given it a celebrity, by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

“ There was a lass, and she was fair,” &c.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out.

The heroine of the foregoing is miss M., daughter to Mr. M. of D., one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.

CXXIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of affectation; but as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you! BURNS'S character for generosity of sentiment and

such elegance and correctness. Your preface is admirably written ; only your partiality to me made you say too much : however, it will bide down to double every effort in the future part of the work. The following are a few remarks on the songs in the list you sent me. I knew what I write to you, so I may be often tantamount or perhaps contradictory.

The Flowers of the Forest is charming as it is and should be, and must be, set to the notes though out of your rule, the three stanzas beg

“ I hae seen the smiling o’ fortune beguiling

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalise the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn ; I forget of what

the best set. It is full of his own interpolations, but no matter.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time, allow me to congratulate you now, as a brother of the quill. You have *committed* your character and fame; which will now be tried for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the SONS and DAUGHTERS OF TASTE — all whom poetry can please, or music charm.

Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm, that your great-grand-child will hold up your volumes, and say, with honest pride, "This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor."

CXXIV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR THOMSON,
I hold the pen for our friend Clarke, who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The *Georgium Sidus* he thinks is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

* * * * *

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

YOUR objection, my dear
song of *Logan Water*, I
but it is difficult to mend
other passage you object
same light to me.

I have tried my hand
will probably think, with
such a cursed, cramp, out
I despair of doing any thi

“ While larks wi

So much for namby-pam
my hand on it in Scots
myself and most at home

I have just put the last
for *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen*
it I shall be pleased as t

CXXVI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT crinkum-crankum tune, *Robin Adair*, has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend C.'s story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows :

“ Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,” &c.

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother's singing Gaelic songs to both *Robin Adair* and *Gramachree*. They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness : so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them ; — except, what I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both. A case in point — They have lately, in Ireland, published an Irish air, as they say, called *Caun du-delish*. The fact is, in a publication of Corri's, a great while ago, you will find the same air, called a

TO MR. THO

MY DEAR SIR,

LET me in this ae night, I v
glad that you are pleased wit
cave, &c., as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday even
the Museum in my hand; wh
Water, "What numbers sha
&c., as the words appeared to
of so fine an air, and recollect
list, I sat and raved under the s
till I wrote one to suit the
wrong; but I think it not in
must know, that in Ramsay's
modern song first appeared,
the time Allen came in 1742

ink so too (not else), you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than all the year else.

God bless you !

CXXVIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad, one of our airs? I admire it much; and yesterday I set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. The set of the air which I had in my eye is in Johnson's Museum.

" O whistle, and I'll come to you my lad," &c.

Another favourite air of mine is *The muckin' o' the eardie's Byre*; when sung slow with expression, I have wished that it had had better poetry: that I have endeavoured to supply as follows:

" Adown winding Nith I did wander," &c.

Mr. Clarke begs you to give miss Phyllis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his.

...e, let me take thee to my breast," &c.

...k the above will suit your idea of your
... I shall be highly pleased. *The last*
...er the moor, I cannot meddle with, as

to mending it; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of chorusses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

CXXX.

TO MR. THOMSON,

WITH "DAINTY DAVIE."

"Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers," &c.

August, 1793.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N.B. In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is **** nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

CXXXI.

TO MISS C * * *.

August, 1793.

MADAM,

SOME rather unlooked-for accidents have prevented my doing myself the honour of a second visit to Arbeigland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant to have done. However, I still

MS'S LETTERS.

asure before the busy *Months*

of my late pieces, as *some kind*
sure I have received in perusing
e of poems in the possession of
repay one with an *old song*, i-
rce you, madam, I know, will
sald of illustrious descent is, I
e of a talent for poetry, none
o had pretensions to it. The
of the rhyming tribe often em-
nen I am disposed to be melan-
t, among all the martyrologies
ed, so rueful a narrative as the

In the comparative' view of
on is not what they are doomed
hey are formed to bear. Take
d, give him a stronger imagina-
icate sensibility, which between
ader a more ungovernable set of
e usual lot of man ; implant in
npulse to some idle vagary, such
lowers in fantastical nosegays,
per to his haunt by his chirping
frisks of the little minnows in
hunting after the intrigues of
rt, send him adrift after some
eternally mislead him from the
l yet curse him with a keener
a living for the pleasures that
lastly, fill up the measure of
ng on him a spurning sense of
nd you have created a wight

as miserable as a poet. To you, madam, I not recount the fairy pleasures the muse besto counterbalance this catalogue of evils. ching poetry is like bewitching woman; she all-ages been accused of misleading mankind the councils of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them poverty, branding them with infamy, and ing them in the whirling vortex of ruin; yet, is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worthy the name—that even ody hermit's solitary prospect of paradisiacal is but the glitter of a northern sun rising over en region, compared with the many pleasures, ameless raptures, that we owe to the lovely of the heart of Man!

CXXXII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

may readily trust, my dear sir, that any exertion my power is heartily at your service. But hing I must hint to you; the very name of Pindar is of great service to your publication, t a verse from him now and then; though I no objection, as well as I can, to bear the bur- f the business.

I know that my pretensions to musical taste are only a few of nature's instincts, untaught and ordered by art. For this reason many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit

whether the old air *Hey to*
this number ; but well I
hautboy, it has often f
There is a tradition, whi
places of Scotland, that it
at the battle of Bannockl
solitary wanderings, war
siasm on the theme of
which I threw into a kin
the air, that one might
Royal Scot's address to
eventful morning.*

“ Scots, wha hae

So may God ever def
liberty. as He did that c

so ancient, roused my rhyming
set of the tune, with his bass, you
Museum; though I am afraid that
it will entitle it to a place in your

CXXXIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

Dear sir, that you will begin to think
me is persecution. No matter, I
ballad is my hobby-horse; which
a simple sort of harmless idiotical
yet this blessed headstrong pro-
pensity it has fairly made off with a
gets so enamoured with the tinkle-
le of its own bells, that it is sure
rlic, the bedlam-jockey, quite be-
hind or post in the common race

song I have composed for *Oran-*
d air, that, you tell me in your
olved to give a place to in your
s moment finished the song, so
g from the mint. If it suit you,
also well!

At the hour, the boat arrive," &c.

I HAVE received your list,
my observations on it.*

Down the burn Davie.
an alteration, leaving out 1
stanza, and the first half of

As down the burn the
And thro' the flower
His cheek to hers he a
And love was ay the

With " Mary, when a
Sic pleasure to renew
Quoth Mary, " Love,
And ay shall follow

Thro' the wood laddie.
nion, that both in this, and

ctave higher, is only for instrumental music, and could be much better omitted in singing.

Cowden-knowes. Remember in your index that the song is in pure English to this tune, beginning,

“ When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,” &c.

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

Laddie lie near me, must *lie by me* for some time. I do not know the air; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I can never compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair; by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism!

Gill Morrice I am for leaving out. It is a plaguy length; the air itself is never sung; and its place can well be supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list. For instance, *Craigie-burn Wood* and *Roy's Wife*. The first, beside its

intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has *high* merit, as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the handwriting of the lady who composed it; and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.

Highland laddie. The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new, an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old *Highland laddie*, which pleases me more than either of them. It is sometimes called *Ginglan Johnnie*; it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, *I hae been at Crookieden*, &c. I would advise you in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and in the mean time, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

Auld Sir Simon I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place *The Quaker's Wife*.

Blithe hae I been o'er the hill, is one of the finest songs ever I made in my life; and besides, is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your work, perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly include *The bonniest lass in a' the world* in your collection.

Daintie Davie I have heard sung nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing has surprised me so much as you

opinion on this subject. If it will not suit as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

Fee him Father. I enclose you Frazer's set of this tune when he plays it slow; in fact he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas in that style, merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Frazer gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which *Patie Allan's mither died, that was about the back o' midnight*; and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had over-set every mortal in company, except the hautbois and the muse.

* * * * *

"Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, thou hast left me ever."

Jockey and Jenny I would discard, and in its place would put *There's nae luck about the house*, which has a very pleasant air, and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. *When she came ben she bobbet*, as an air, is more beautiful than either, and in the *andante* way would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

Saw ye my Father? is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last, I wandered out, and began a tender song; in what I think is its-native style. I must premise, that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the

pathos. Every country girl sin
ther? &c.

My song is but just begun
before I proceed, to know ye
have sprinkled it with the Sc
may be easily turned into corre

Todlin hame. Urbani men
which has long been mine; th
susceptible of pathos: accord
hear him at your concert try it
in the Museum; *Ye banks and*
One song more and I have do
The air is but *mediocre*; but th
old song of the olden times,
been in print, nor even in ma
it down from an old man's
recommend any air.

“ Should auld acquaintance

Now I suppose I have tired
You must, after all is over, ha
lads, properly so called. *Gill M*
Mr Pherson's Farewell, Battle o
ran and they ran (I know the
ing ballad, and his history),
Allan (I can furnish a finer s
any that has yet appeared),
know that I really have the ol
Cherry and the Slae was sung;
tioned as a well known air in S

* “ Where are the joys I hae me

book published before poor Mary's days. It was then called *The banks o' Helicon*; an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's history of Scottish music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit: but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

CXXXV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

AM happy, my dear sir, that my ode pleases you much. Your idea, "honour's bed," is, though beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so, if you please, will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows.*

J. B. I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace.

"A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow."

couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had one of my correspondence. The post goes, and I ache miserably. One comfort!—I suffer much just now in this world, for last night's dream, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the next to come. Amen.

"Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled," &c.

CXXXVI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it; as I think I have much improved it. Instead of "soger! hero!" I will have it "Caledonian! on wi' me!"

I have scrutinized it over and over; and to the world some way or other it shall go as it is. At the same time it will not in the least hurt me, should you leave it out altogether, and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan's verses.*

I have finished my song to *Saw ye my Father!* and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the *expression* of the air, is true; but allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter: however, in that I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a

* Mr. Thomson has very properly adopted this song (if it may be so called) as the bard presented it to him. He has attached it to the air of *Lewie Gordon*, and perhaps among the existing airs he could not find a better; but the poetry is suited to a much higher strain of music, and *may employ* the genius of some Scottish Handel, if any *such* should in future arise.

business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular: my advice is, to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are—

“Where are the joys I have met in the morning,” &c.

Adieu my dear sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

CXXXVIL

TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs, for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

For *Muirland Willie*, you have, in Ramsay's Teatable, an excellent song, beginning, “Ah! why those tears in Nelly's eyes?” As for *The Collier's Tochter*, take the following old Bacchanal.

“Deluded swain, the pleasure,” &c.

The faulty line in Logan-Water, I mend thus:

“How can your flinty hearts enjoy,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?”

The song otherwise will pass. As to *M'Gregoir's Rua-Ruth*, you will see a song of mine to it, with a

set of the air superior to yours, in the *Museum*, vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins,

“ Raving winds around her blowing.”

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the *Banks of Banna*, for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs: I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of *Roy's Wife*, for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. *Deil tak the wars*, is a charming song; so is, *Saw ye my Peggy? There's nae luck about the house*, well deserves a place. I cannot say that, *O'er the hills and far awa*, strikes me as equal to your selection. *This is no my ain house*, is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of *I hae laid a herrin in sawt*? I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are pretty; and there are many others of the same kind, pretty; but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert *Fie, let us a' to the bridal*, to any other words than its own.

What pleases me, as simple and naïve, disgraces you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, *Fie, gie me my coggie, Sirs—Fie, let us a' to the bridal*, with several others of that cast, are to me highly pleasing; while, *Saw ye my Father, or saw ye my Mother?* delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, *Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has*

gotten? pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but, “Ilka man wears his belt his ain gait.”

CXXXVIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

October, 1793.

YOUR last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas, poor Erskine!* The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has till now scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the *Quaker's Wife*; though, by the bye, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of *Leiger m' choss*. The following verses, I hope, will please you, as an English song to the air.

“Thine am I, my faithful fair,” &c.

Your objection to the English song I proposed for *John Anderson my jo*, is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit.

* The honourable A. Erskine, brother to Lord Kelly.

SONG.

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

O, condescend, dear charming maid,
 My wretched state to view;
 A tender swain to love betray'd,
 And sad despair, by you.

While here, all melancholy,
 My passion I deplore,
 Yet, urged by stern, resistless fate,
 I love thee more and more.

I heard of love, and with disdain
 The urchin's power denied;
 I laugh'd at every lover's pain,
 And mock'd them when they sigh'd.

But how my state is alter'd!
 Those happy days are o'er;
 For all thy unrelenting hate,
 I love thee more and more.

O, yield, illustrious beauty, yield,
 No longer let me mourn;
 And though victorious in the field,
 Thy captive do not scorn.

Let generous pity warm thee,
 My wonted peace restore;
 And, grateful, I shall bless thee still,
 And love thee more and more.

The following address of Turnbull's to the
 ingale, will suit as an English song to the a
was a lass and she was fair. By the bye,
 has a great many songs in MS. which I

mand, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour ; but I like some of his pieces very much.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

For though the muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain ;
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

All day, with fashion's gaudy sons,
In sport she wanders o'er the plain ;
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
The notes of her forsaken swain.

When evening shades obscure the sky,
And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's, which would go charmingly to *Lewie Gordon*.

LAURA.

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood, or winding rill ;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers ;

Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

If at rosy dawn I choose
To indulge the smiling muse;
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat;
If, beneath the moon's pale ray
Through unfrequented wilds I
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

When at night the drowsy god
Waves his sleep-compelling rod
And to fancy's wakeful eyes
Bids celestial visions rise;
While with boundless joy I ro
Through the fairy-land of love
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

The rest of your letter I shall
other opportunity.

CXXXIX.

TO JOHN M'MURDO,

SIR,

It is said that we take the greatest
our greatest friends, and I pay my
compliment in the manner in which
apply the remark. I have owed you
than ever I owed it to any man.—

count, and here are six guineas ; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these damned dirty, dog's-eat'd little pages,* I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under ; the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself was fully as much as I could ever make head against ; but to owe you money too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have some years been making : I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not conveniently spare them above five or six days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr. Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world ; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

CXL.

TO MRS. R

*Who was to bespeak a Play one Evening at the
Dumfries Theatre.*

I AM thinking to send my *Address* to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction, so pray look over it.

* Scottish Bank Notes.

“ To play th
Of frolic fancy, and incessan
Those rapid pictures, that
Of fleet ideas, never join'd
Where lively *wit* excites to
Or folly-painting *humour*,
Calls laughter forth, deep-s

But as you rejoice with the
also remember to weep with
pity your melancholy friend.

CXLI.

To a Lady, in favour of

MADAM,
You were so very good as to

dolence of those who have the good things of this life in their gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon, the rightful due of retiring, humble want ! Of all the qualities we assign to the Author and Director of Nature, by far the most enviable is—to be able “ to wipe away all tears from all eyes.” O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent *mausoleums*, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor honest heart happy !

But I crave your pardon, madam ; I came to beg, not to preach.

CXLII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

TO MR. * * *.

1794.

I AM extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests, in a letter which Mr. S * * * showed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisor's list ; and as we come on there by precedence, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*—then, a friend might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty, to two hundred a-year ; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly

and have, besides a handsom
complete leisure. A life of
decent competence, is the su
It would be the prudish affect
me, to say that I do not need,
debted to a political friend ;
I by no means lay my affairs
hook my dependent situation
If, in my progress of life, an
where the good offices of a ger
character and political conseq
forward, I will petition you
same frankness and sincerity
the honour to subscribe myse

CXLIII.

BURNS'S LETTER

furniture on Tuesday, when v
business of the visit.

* * * * *

Among the profusion of idle
insidious craft, or unmeaning fo
at your shrine—a shrine, ho
such adoration!—permit me, w
sake, to pay you the honest trib
and an independent mind ; and
I am, thou most amiable, and
of thy sex, with the most res
fervent regard, thine, &c.

CXLIV.

TO THE SAM

I WILL wait on you, my ever
whether in the morning I an
closes a period of our cursed re
may probably keep me employe
noon. Fine employment for a
is a species of the human genu
horse class : what enviable do
and round, and round they go.
drives his cotton-mill, is their
without an idea or wish beyon
sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, an
here I sit, altogether November
of fretfulness and melancholy ;
one to rouse me to passion, no
pose me in torpor ; my soul flo
round her tenement, like a wi

* * *

Pray that wisdom and blis
tors of

CXLV

TO THE S

I HAVE this moment got the
I am sorry to see that he ha
It shall be a lesson to me ho
again.

I have sent you *Werter*, to
the smallest opportunity of c

'Tis true, madam, I saw y
W E R T E R

CXLVI.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spice of caprice in your composition, and you have as often disavowed it: even, perhaps, while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could *any thing* estrange me from a friend such as you?—No! To-morrow I shall have the honour of waiting on you.

Farewell, thou first of friends, and most accomplished of women; even with all thy little caprices!

CXLVII.

TO THE SAME.

MADAM,

I RETURN your common-place book: I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms; but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that “offences come only from the heart,” before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you, as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect and contemptuous scorn—is a wrench that *my heart* can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of

... an un-
tendency to rou-
som, which, though
his soul, is at least an opiate
ncy.
e profoundest respect for your abilities;
sincere esteem and ardent regard for your
heart and amiable manners; and the most
wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and
have the honour to be, madam, your most
d humble servant.

CXLVIII.

TO JOHN SYME, ESQ.

You know that, among other high dignities, you
have the honour to be my supreme court of critical
judicature, from which there is no appeal. I en-
close you a song which I composed since I saw you,
and I am going to give you the history of it. Do
you know, that among much that I admire in the
characters and manners of those great folks who
have now the honour to call my acquaintances,
O * * * family, there is nothing charms me
than Mr. O's unconcealable attachment to the
comparable woman. Did you ever, my dear
meet with a man who owed more to the
Giver of all good things than Mr. O.? A
tune, a pleasing exterior, self-evident an-
positions, and an ingenuous upright min-
informed, too, much beyond the usual

fellows of his rank and fortune; and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying any thing adequate. In my song, I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings, on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I in my first fervour, thought of sending it to Mrs. O * * * ; but on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect, might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors.*

CXLIX.

TO MISS * * * *

MADAM,

NOTHING short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter. Except my ardent and just esteem for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have past with the friend of my soul and his amiable connexions! the wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world! and the cutting reflection of all, that I had most unfortunately, though most undeservedly, lost the confidence of that soul of worth, ere it took its flight!

* The song enclosed was—"O wae ye wha's in yon town!"

u, man
your means.
ate friend, I made a
erse which I had ever
them local, some of
all of them unfit for the
e little fame at stake, a
e when the hate of those
ag," and the contumelious
cident has made my supe-
dves, be gone to the regions
asy now for the fate of those
rs. *** have the goodness to
orn them to me? As a pledge
ere bestowed; and that circum-
all their merit. Most unhappily
it they no longer possess; and I
***'s goodness, which I well
r will revere, will not refuse this
nan whom she once held in some
imation.

With the sincerest esteem, I have the honour to be, madam, &c.

CL.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

25th February, 1794.

CANST thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tossed on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame, tremblingly alive as the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries with thy inquiries after me?

* * * * *

For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these * * * * * times; losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be enervated by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the Gospel: he might

OTHER is made up of those feelings which, however the sceptic may (enthusiast disfigure them, are yet original and component parts of those *senses of the mind*, if I may pression, which connect us with those awful obscure realities — an equally beneficent God; and a way beyond death and the grave. The fire of combat, while a ray of hope be — the last pours the balm of wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear (you and I ever talked on the subject all. I know some who laugh at it, crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning most as an uncertain obscurity, who never know any thing of. and wit

shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart ; and an imagination, delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring ; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson,

“ These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God. — The rolling year
Is full of thee.”

And so on in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn.

These are no ideal pleasures : they are real delights ; and I ask what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say equal, to them ? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious Virtue stamps them for her own ; and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a blessing, judging, and approving God.

MADAM,

I DARE say this is the fi
from this nether world
gions of Hell, amid the
time and manner of my
exactly know, as I took
a fever of intoxication, c
table mansion; but, on
tried, and sentenced to
tures of this infernal co
nine years, eleven mon
and all on account of t
duct yesternight under y
on a bed of pitiless furz
clined on a pillow of ev
infernal tormentor, wrin

me ; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, madam, I have much to apologize. Your good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had made on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss I***, too, a woman of fine sense, gentle and unassuming manners—do make, on my part, a miserable d—d wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs. G****, a charming woman, did me the honour to be prejudiced in my favour ; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness.—To all the other ladies please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O, all ye powers of decency and decorum ! whisper to them, that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible with me—but—

* * * * *

Regret ! Remorse ! Shame ! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me ! spare me !

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, madam, your humble slave.

CLII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

May, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,
I RETURN you the plates, with which I am highly

he pronounces Anna a most
excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Al
favourite poem for his subject,
highest compliments I have ever

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's b
France, as it will put an entire
Now, and for six or seven month
song, as you shall see by-and-t
pretty enough, composed by Lau
of Heron, which she calls *The B*
is a beautiful romantic stream
ship is a particular friend of n
the following song to it :

“ Here is the glen, and here

CLIII.

That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions.*—* * * * *

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much-honoured friend of mine, Mr. Graham, of Fintry. I wrote on the blank side of the title-page the following address to the young lady:

“ Here, where the Scottish Muse immortal lives,” &c.

CLIV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

30th August, 1794.

THE last evening, as I was straying out, and thinking of *O'er the hills and far away*, I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil, like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first: but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs, but as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—*Sweet Annie frae the sea-beach came*. Now for the song.

“ How can my poor heart be glad,” &c.

* A portion of this letter has been left out, for reasons that will be easily imagined.

BURNS'S LETTERS.

leave to abuse this song, but do it with
Christian meekness.

CLV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

I withdraw my, *On the seas and far away*,
rather : it is unequal, and unworthy the work.
Singing a poem is like begetting a son : you cannot
know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until
you produce him to the world to try him.
For that reason I send you the offspring of my
brain, *abortions* and all ; and, as such, pray look
on them, and forgive them, and burn them. I am
disturbed at your adopting *Ca' the yowes to the
knowes*, as it was owing to me that ever it saw the
light. About seven years ago I was well acquainted
with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr.
Clunie, who sung it charmingly ; and, at my request,
Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When
I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the
song, and mended others, but still it will not do for
you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I
tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up
the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve.
Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections
on its head.

" Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather grows,
Ca' them whare the burnie rows,
My bonnie dearie.

" Hark, the mavis' evening sang," &c.

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs my first scribbling fit.

CLVI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song, called *Onagh's Water-fall*? The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic muse, to expect that every effort of hers shall have merit; still I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the Scots Musical Museum; and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above-mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

"Sae flaxen were her ringlets," &c.

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always without any hypocrisy confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where

you and other judges would probably be disgusted. For instance, I am just now writing verses for *Rothemurche's Rant*, an air which I am in raptures; and in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I can pit against any of you. *Rothemurche*, he says, is an air both original and beautiful; and on his recommendation, I have taken the first part of the song for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for a song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, possibly you may think, and justly, that the poem is as little worth your attention as the music.

I have begun anew, *Let me in this ae night*. I think that we ought to retain the old chorus. I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *dénouement* to be successful or otherwise? should she "let him in," or not?

Did you not once propose *The Sow's Tale* as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is not of its real excellence. I once set about verses which I meant to be in the alternate way of a man and his mistress chanting together. I have no pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christmas name, and yours I am afraid is rather burlesque sentiment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell was the

who seemingly saved her from the grave;
 to him I address the following :

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
 That merit I deny :

You save fair Jessy from the grave!—
 An angel could not die.

and grant you patience with this stupid epistle !

CLVII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

19th October, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

This morning's post I have your list, and, in
 fact, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more
 leisure give you a critique on the whole. Clarke
 comes to your town by to-day's Fly, and I wish you
 would call on him and take his opinion in general :
 I know his taste is a standard. He will return
 again in a week or two ; so, please do not miss
 him for him. One thing I hope he will do, per-
 suade you to adopt my favourite, *Craigie-burn-Wood*,
 your selection : it is as great a favourite of his as
 mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of
 the finest women in Scotland ; and in fact (*entre-
 nous*) is in a manner to me, what Sterne's Eliza
 was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you
 will call it in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love.
 I don't put any of your squinting constructions
 upon it, or have any clishmachlaiver about it among
 acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely
 friend you are indebted for many of your best songs

delighted with —
eye is the godhead of Parnassus,

of her smile the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea
When she came ben she bobbit, the following stanza
of mine, altered a little from what they were
merely when set to another air, may perhaps do
stead of worse stanzas.

“ O, saw ye my dear, my Phely? &c.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. The
(in the Museum) is my composition; the
taken down from Mrs. Burns's voice. It
known in the West Country, but the old version
trash. By the bye, take a look at the tune
and tell me if you do not think it is the original
which *Roslin Castle* is composed. The version
in particular, for the first two or three

actly the old air. *Strathallan's Lament* is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. *Donocht-Head* is not mine; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the *Edinburgh Herald*; and came to the editor of that paper with the *Newcastle* post-mark on it.* *Whistle o'er the lave o't* is mine: the

* The reader will be curious to see this poem, so highly praised by Burns.

Keen blows the wind o'er Donocht-Head,*

The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale;

The Gaber-lunzie tirls my sneck,

And, shivering, tells his waefu' tale:

"Cauld is the night, O let me in,

And dinna let your minstrel fa;

And dinna let his winding-sheet

Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

"Full ninety winters hae I seen,

And piped where gor-cocks whirring flew;

And mony a day I've danced, I ween,

To lilts which from my drone I blew."

My Eppie waked, and soon she cried,

"Get up, guid man, and let him in;

For weel ye ken the winter night

Was short when he began his din."

My Eppie's voice, o wow it's sweet,

Even tho' she bans and scaulds a wee

But when it's tuned to sorrow's tale,

O, haith, its doubly dear to me!

Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,

I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;

* A mountain in the North.

this is set in the museum is imposed on Miss Euphemia Murray commonly and deservedly called Strathmore.

How long and dreary is the Nig
some such words in a collection of s
which I altered and enlarged; and
and to suit your favourite air, I ha
or two across my room, and have a
as you will find on the other page.

" How long and dreary is the r

Tell me how you like this; I
idea of the expression of the tune.
a great deal of tenderness in it.

Your blood is thin. we've tint the a

my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays and sings at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent into the world, as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um has done in his London collection.*

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. I have been at *Duncan Gray*, to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance :

“ Let not woman e'er complain,” &c.

Since the above, I have been out in the country, taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page in this odds-and-ends of a letter. As usual I got *into song*; and returning home, I composed the following :

“ Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature,” &c.

If you honour my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I enclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the Musical Museum. Here follow the verses I intend for it.

• Mr. Ritson.

" But lately seen in gladsome green," &c.

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please : whether this miserable drawling hotchpotch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence ?

CLVIII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

November, 1794.

MANY thanks to you, my dear sir, for your present : it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c. for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious, dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c., it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work. In my last I told you my objections to the song you had selected for *My lodging is on the cold ground*. On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested an idea, which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song :

" My Chloris, mark how green the groves," &c.

do you like the simplicity and tenderness of pastoral? I think it pretty well.

like you for entering so candidly and so kindly the story of *Ma chere amie*. I assure you is never more in earnest in my life, than in the run of that affair which I sent you in my last. Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, I highly venerate: but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of passion,

"Where Love is liberty, and Nature law."

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet; while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains the purchase! * * * * *

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs, of which the measure is something similar to what I want; and, with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the

You may think meanly of this, the bombast original, and you will I have made so much of it. I have to *Rothemurche's Rant*; and you hesitate as to the set of the air for sin

Chorus.—' Lassie wi' the lint-wh

This piece has at least the magnificent pastoral: the vernal morn, the autumnal evening, and the regularly rounded. If you like it will insert it in the Museum.

I am out of temper that you should so tender an air, as *Deil tak the W* old verses. You talk of the silliness *Father?* by heavens! the odds is *Resides* the old song, that

ie air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, idleness, and love. I have again gone over my ag to the tune as follows.

Now for my English song to *Nancy's to the remwood, &c.*

"Farewell, thou stream that winding flows," &c.

There is an air, *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson. *Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon*; this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as far as says of his knights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good view, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke, at first by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm, and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certainly it is, that in a few days Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the true story of the *Black Keys*; but this account which I have just given you, Mr. Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now to show you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old

ballads sung through the streets
my name at the head of them as
it was the first time I had ever s

I thank you for admitting C
and I shall take care to furni
chorus. In fact the chorus was
a part of some old verses to the
myself in a more than ordinar
ment, I shall write a new *Craigi*
gether. My heart is much in th

I am ashamed, my dear fellow
quest; 'tis dunning your genero
ment, when I had forgotten whe
poor, I promised Chloris a copy
wings my honest pride to write
ungracious request is doubly so
logy. To make you some ame
have extracted the necessary

CLIX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

19th November, 1794.

You see, my dear sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is for you, though it is not an hour old.

“O Philly, happy be that day,” &c.

Tell me honestly how you like it; and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain, I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name Philly; but it is the common abbreviation of Phyllis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has to my ear a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for any thing except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me, as my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity: whereas, simplicity is as much *eignée* from vul-

chorus goes, w m, --
chorus going first, that is the case
as well as *Rothemurche*. In fact, i
both tunes, the rhythm is so peculi
and on that irregularity depends a
beauty, that we must e'en take
their wildness, and humour the v
Leaving out the starting note, in b
think, an effect, that no regulari
balance the want of.

Try

{ O Roy's Wife
{ O lassie wi' th

and

Compare with,

{ Roy's Wife o
{ Lassie wi' th

Does not the tameness of the
"man's In the last case, wil

nalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, *Todlin Hame*, is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and *Andrew and his cutty Gun*, is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ache. A-propos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday, for an air I like much—*Lumps o' Pudding*.

“Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,” &c.

If you do not relish this air, I will send it to Johnson.

Since yesterday's penmanship, I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to *Roy's Wife*. You will allow me that in this instance, my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish.

Chorus—“Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?” &c.

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish Blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth,) that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts; the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of

the art of it. If Mr. Burns
ought of mine ; as I look
brother-brush with him.
;” and I will say it, that
Mr. Burns to be the only
ers of Scottish costume in

CLX.

MR. THOMSON.

December, 1794.

you, the pride of my heart, to do
ward, or add to the value of your
I agree with you that the Jacobite

FEAR for my so
et originality is
a multiplicity
ears altogethe
we, poetic fol
for instance ;
there must
of these sai
A great
and wine
The foll
is no

song in the Museum, to *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame*, would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following :

" Now in her green mantle blithe nature arrays," &c.

How does this please you ? As to the point of time, for the expression, in your proposed print from my *Soger's Return*, it must certainly be at — "*She gazed.*" The interesting dubity and suspense, taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness in his, strike me, as things of which a master will make a great deal. In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

CLXI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I FEAR for my songs ; however a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we, poetic folks, have been describing the spring, for instance ; and as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks.

A great critic, Aikin, on songs, says, that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song ; but will be allowed, I think, to be two

hook, but merely by way of *vive la* !
the piece is not really poetry. How wi
ing do for *Craigie-burn-Wood* ?

" Sweet fa's the eve on Craigie-burn

Farewell! God bless you.

CLXII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

Ecclefechan, 7th
You cannot have any idea of the pr
which I write to you. In the course
as supervisor (in which capacity I ha
late) I came yesterday to this

unk, to forget these miseries ; or to hang myself, get rid of them ; like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), of two evils, have chosen the least, and am, very unk, at your service !

I wrote to you yesterday from Dumfries. I had at time then to tell you all I wanted to say ; and heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air — I am sure you must know, *We'll gang nae mair to yon town?* I think, in some time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it ; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair name in my eye to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

CLXIII. .

TO MR. THOMSON,

WITH TWO SONGS.

“ How cruel are the parents,” &c.

“ Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion,” &c.

Well ! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders : your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit for poetising, provided that the strait jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or two administer a little of the intoxicating portion of your applause, it will increase your humble servant's frenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment “ holding high
VOL. II. G

TO MR. THOMAS.

TEN thousand thanks for your
though I am ashamed of the va
stowed on a man who has not
rited such an instance of kindne
to two or three judges of the fir
they all agree with me in classi
production. My phiz is *sae hens*
joiner's apprentice whom Mr
break up the parcel (I was ou
knew it at once.—My most gr
Allan, who has honoured my
with his masterly pencil. O
is, that the little one who i
attempt on the cat's tale. is

duced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

CLXV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

IN *Whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad*, the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement :

O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
 O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
 Tho' father and mother, and a' should gae mad,
 Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame at whose shrine I, the priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a dame, whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning; a fair one, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment; and dispute her commands if you dare!

Chorus.—"O this is no my ain lassie," &c.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The enclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

problem.

will be soon smothered.

you like the song, it may go as
to the air of *I wish my love was in*
Erskine's English lines may follow.

I enclose you, a *For a' that an*
was never in print; it is a much
mine. I have been told that it wa
lady.

* * * * *

TO MR. CUNNINGH

WITH TWO SONG

" Now spring has clad the grove

" O bonnie was yon rosy

on the blank leaf of

CLXVI.

TO MR. THOMSON.

WITH ENGLISH SONG.

“ Forlorn, my love, no comfort near,” &c.

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the *speed* of my Pegasus, but what say you to his *bottom*?

CLXVII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

WITH SCOTTISH BALLAD.

“ Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,” &c.

AND FRAGMENT.

“ Why, why tell thy lover,” &c.

Such is the peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the tooth-ache, so have not a word to spare.

CLXVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

15th Dec. 1795.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am in a complete Decemberish humour—somy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall not drawl out a letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because now you will sympathize in it: these four months a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been ill, that every day, a week or less, threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father, for God knows, they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I have a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay: and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of Fate, even in all the vigour of manhood as I am—such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock?—I am here that I envy your people of fortune! A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters in dependency and friends; while I—but I shall be distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad—

O that I had ne'er been married,
 I would never had nae care;
 Now I've gotten wife and bairns,
 They cry crowdie! evermair.

Crowdie! ance; crowdie! twice;
 Crowdie! three times in a day:
 An ye, crowdie! ony mair,
 Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.'

* * * *

December 24th.

I have had a brilliant theatre here this season ; as all other business has, it experiences a lull of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country, *want of cash*. I mention our theatre to lug in an occasional *Address* which I have for the benefit-night of one of the actrèsses, which is as follows :

Still anxious to secure your partial favour," &c.

See Poems.

25th, Christmas Morning.

My much-loved friend, is a morning of ; accept mine—so heaven hear me as they care ! that blessings may attend your steps, Fiction know you not ! In the charming of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, the Great Spirit bear up the weight of thy cares, and blunt the arrow that brings them

that I talk of authors, how do you like it ? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem ? The

religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature; the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco*, in return for mine? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters; I mean those which I first sketched in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which, from time to time, I had parcelled by as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy; I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

CLXIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, IN LONDON.

Dumfries, 20th Dec. 1795.

I HAVE been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your *last* to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your

letter ; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route ; and now I know not what is become of you, or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits ! Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen, and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English.

* * * * *

December 29th.

Since I began this letter I have been appointed to act in the capacity of the supervisor here ; and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent : but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form ; a consummation devoutly to be wished ! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

This is the season (New-year's-day is now my

all of wishing: and
ed up for you! May life to
ceasing while it lasts, for your own sake,
it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my wish for
own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your
friends! What a transient business is life! Very
lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young
man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and
stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my
frame. With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a
few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on
having had, in early days, religion strongly im-
pressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any
one as to which sect he belongs to, or what creed he
believes; but I look on the man who is firmly per-
suaded of infinite Wisdom and Goodness super-
tending and directing every circumstance that
happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as ha-
ving a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a
prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, tri-
and distress; and a never-failing anchor of
when he looks beyond the grave.

January
You will have seen our worthy and
friend the doctor, long ere this. I hope
and beg to be remembered to him. I ha-
reading over again, I dare say for the
fiftieth time, his *View of Society and*
till I read it with delight. His humo-
original—it is neither the humour of
Swift, nor Sterne, nor of any body
By the bye, you have deprived v

hat, when you are disposed to rake up the
my neglect from among the ashes of my

s paid me a pretty compliment, by quoting
is last publication.*

* * * * *

CLXX.

TO MRS. R * * * * .

20th January, 1796.

ANNOT express my gratitude to you for allowing
a longer perusal of *Anacharsis*. In fact, I never
with a book that bewitched me so much; and
as a member of the library, must warmly feel
a obligation you have laid us under. Indeed to
e the obligation is stronger than to any other in-
vidual of our society; as *Anacharsis* in an indis-
nsable desideratum to a son of the Muses.

The health you wished me in your morning's card
, I think, flown from me for ever. I have not been
le to leave my bed to-day till about an hour ago.
hese wickedly unlucky advertisements I lent (I did
rong) to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest
him.

The Muses have not quite forsaken me. The fol-
wing detached stanzas I intend to interweave in
me disastrous tale of a shepherd.

* * * * *

* Edward.

THESE many months you have
my debt—what sin of ignorance
against so highly valued a friend
loss to guess. Alas, madam!
this time to be deprived of an
nant of my pleasures. I have
the cup of affliction. The au
my only daughter and darling
distance too, and so rapidly, as
power to pay the last duties to
begun to recover from that sh
myself the victim of a most sev
and long the die spun doubtful
weeks of a sick bed, it seems to
and I am beginning to crawl a
once indeed have been before n

BURNS'S LETTERS.

CLXXII.

TO MR. THOMSON.

February

MANY thanks, my dear sir, for your handsome present to Mrs. B * * *, and for my new vol. of P. Pindar.—Peter is a delightful and a first favourite of mine. I am much with your idea of publishing a collection of in octavo, with etchings. I am extremely to lend every assistance in my power. I shall cheerfully undertake the task of verses for.

I have already, you know, equipped the words, and the other day I strung up a rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, admire much.

“Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms

If this will do, you have now four of engagement. In my by-past songs I did thing; the name Chloris—I meant it a titious name of a certain lady: but, on thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad.—and some things else, in my next: I have amendments to propose.—What you once said of “flaxen locks” is just; they can be into an *elegant* description of beauty. Of again—God bless you!

...my dear A. ROBINSON, I
time ere I tune my lyre again !
I have sat and wept," almost ev
last : I have only known exist
of the heavy hand of sickness
time by the repercussions of p
cold, and fever, have formed to
bination. I close my eyes in mi
without hope ; I look on the
with poor Fergusson——

" Say, wherefore has an all-in
Light to the comfortless and v

This will be delivered to yo
landlady of the Globe Tavern he
many years has been my how
friend Clarke and I have had mi

ry I am to think that he yet has a well-
ope of health and enjoyment in this
for me—but that is a * * * * sub-

CLXXIV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

SIR,
tioned to you an air which I have long
Here's a health to them that's awa, hincey,
if you took any notice of it. I have
ying to suit it with verses; and I beg
ommend the air to your attention once
ve only begun it.

—"Here's a health to aye I lo'e dear," &c.

CLXXV.

TO MR. THOMSON.

e delivered by a Mr. Lewars, a young
common merit. As he will be a day or
1, you will have leisure, if you choose,
by him; and if you have a spare half
id with him, I shall place your kindness
int. I have no copies of the songs I
ou, and I have taken a fancy to review
nd possibly may mend some of them;
ou have complete leisure, I will thank

son for either the originals or copies.* I had rather be the author of five well-written songs, than of ten, otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout : — a sad business !

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

CLXXVI.

TO MRS. R * * * * *

Who had desired him to go to the Birth-Day Assembly on that day, to show his loyalty.

4th June, 1796.

I AM in such miserable health as to be utterly incapable of showing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting, like that of Balak to Balaam — “Come, curse me Jacob ; and come, defy me Israel !” So say I — Come, curse me that east wind ; and come, defy me the north ! Would you have me, in such circumstances, copy you out a love song ?

* * * * *

* It is needless to say, that this revival Burns did not live to perform.

I may, perhaps, see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the ball.—Why should I? “Man delights not me, nor woman either!” Can you supply me with the song, *Let us all be unhappy together*—do if you can, and oblige *le pauvre misérable*.

R. B.

CLXXVII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Brow, Sea-bathing Quarters, 7th July, 1796.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

I RECEIVED yours here this moment, and am indeed highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention; a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more! For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bed-fast, and sometimes not; but these last three months, I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me.—Pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled! fled!—but I can no more on the subject—only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing, and country quarters, and riding.—The dence of the matter is this; when an exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to 35*l*. instead of 50*l*.—What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself, and keep a horse in country quarters—with a wife and five children at home, on 35*l*.? I mention this,

If the,
with an exit truly ... ,
must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs ;
memory does not serve me with, a
copy here ; but I shall be at home
will send it you.—A-propos to being
Burns threatens in a week or two to
to my paternal charge, which, if of
der, I intend shall be introduced to
the respectable designation of *Alex
ham Burns*. My last was *James Gl*
can have no objection to the comp
Farewell !

CLXXVIII.

TO MRS. BURN

ments to her, and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband,

R. B.

CLXXIX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

Brow, on the Solway Frith, 12th July, 1796.

AFTER all my boasted independence, cursed necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel * * * of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song genius you have seen. I tried my hand on *Rothemurche* this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

CHORUS.—“Fairer maid on Devon banks,” &c.

CLXXX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Brow, 12th July, 1796.

MADAM,

HAVE written you so often, without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that "bourn whence no traveller returns." Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell!!!

R. B.

The above is supposed to be the last production of Robert Burns, who died on the 21st of the month, nine days afterwards. He had, however, the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled.

CLXXXI.

• TO • • • •

THE partiality of my countrymen has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I hope have been found in the man. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and children, have pointed out my present occupation as the only eligible line of life within my reach. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern, and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of the degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. Often in blasting anticipation have I listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exultingly asserting that Burns, notwithstanding the *fanfaronade* of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held up to public view, and to public estimation, as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the lowest of mankind.

In your illustrious hands, sir, permit me to lodge my strong disavowal and defiance of such slander-

* The exact chronological place for this letter is not stated by Dr. Currie; it is therefore given at the close, as illustrative of the character and feelings of our author.



As the great end of human society is
wiser and better, this ought therefore
principal view of every man in every
life. But as experience has taught us
studies as inform the head and mend
when long continued, are apt to exhaus
ties of the mind, it has been found prop
and unbend the mind by some employ
other, that may be agreeable enough
powers in exercise, but at the same t
serious as to exhaust them. But, su
this, by far the greater part of mankin
the necessity of *earning the sustenance o
by the labour of their bodies*, whereby t
faculties of the mind, but the nerves an
the body, are so fatigued, that it is ab
cessary to have recourse to some am
diversion, to relieve the wearied man,
with the necessary labours of life.

As the best of things, however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretence of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation; and, instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly, and ended with guilt and wretchedness. Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton, viz. Hugh Reid, Robert Burns, Gilbert Burns, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchel, Thomas Wright, and William M'Gavin, resolved, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a club or society, under such rules and regulations, that while we should forget our cares and labours in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum; and after agreeing on these, and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th of November, 1780, commonly called Hallowe'en, and after choosing Robert Burns president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question — *Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women; the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person, nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune: which of them shall he choose?* Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed, and shortly thereafter we chose Robert Richie

ons to be observed in the Bachelors'
Club.

shall meet at Tarbolton every fourth
when a question on any subject shall
disputed points of religion only ex-
manner hereafter directed; which
be debated in the club, each member
er side he thinks proper.

he club is met, the president, or, he
one of the members, till he come,
as seat; then the other members shall
ves; those, who are for one side of the
the president's right hand; and those,
r the other side, on his left; which of
have the right hand is to be determined
sident. The president and four of the

erson to whom Burns addressed his *Epistle*
rother poet.

members being present, shall have power to transact any ordinary part of the society's business.

3d. The club met and seated, the president shall read the question out of the club's book of records (which book is always to be kept by the president), then the two members nearest the president shall cast lots who of them shall speak first, and according as the lot shall determine, the member nearest the president on that side shall deliver his opinion, and the member nearest on the other side shall reply to him; then the second member of the side that spoke first; then the second member of the side that spoke second; and so on to the end of the company; but if there be fewer members on one side than on the other, when all the members of the least side have spoken according to their places, any of them, as they please among themselves, may reply to the remaining members of the opposite side; when both sides have spoken, the president shall give his opinion, after which they may go over it a second or more times, and so continue the question.

4th. The club shall then proceed to the choice of a question for the subject of next night's meeting. The president shall first propose one, and any other member who chooses may propose more questions; and whatever one of them is most agreeable to the majority of the members, shall be the subject of debate next club-night.

5th. The club shall, lastly, elect a new president for the next meeting: the president shall first name one, then any of the club may name another, and whoever of them has the majority of votes shall be duly elected; allowing the president the first vote, and the casting vote upon a par, but none other.

Then after a general toast to mistresses of the club, they shall dismiss.

6th. There shall be no private conversation carried on during the time of debate, nor shall any member interrupt another while he is speaking, under the penalty of a reprimand from the president for the first fault, doubling his share of the reckoning for the second, trebling it for the third, and so on in proportion for every other fault, provided always however that any member may speak at any time after leave asked and given by the president.—All swearing and profane language, and particularly all obscene and indecent conversation, is strictly prohibited, under the same penalty as aforesaid in the first clause of this article.

7th. No member, on any pretence whatever, shall mention any of the club's affairs to any other person but a brother-member, under the pain of being excluded; and particularly if any member shall reveal any of the speeches or affairs of the club, with a view to ridicule or laugh at any of the rest of the members, he shall be for ever excommunicated from the society; and the rest of the members are desired, as much as possible, to avoid, and have no communication with him as a friend or comrade.

8th. Every member shall attend at the meetings, without he can give a proper excuse for not attending; and it is desired that every one who cannot attend, will send his excuse with some other member; and he who shall be absent three meetings without sending such excuse, shall be summoned to the next club-night, when, if he fail to appear, or send an excuse, he shall be excluded.

9th. The club shall not consist of more than six-

teen members, all bachelors, belonging to the parish of Tarbolton: except a brother-member marry, and in that case he may be continued, if the majority of the club think proper. No person shall be admitted a member of this society, without the unanimous consent of the club; and any member may withdraw from the club altogether, by giving a notice to the president in writing of his departure.

10th. Every man proper for a member of this society, must have a frank, honest, open heart; above any thing dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex. No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society is, a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who, if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as genteelly to make both ends meet—is just as happy as this world can make him.



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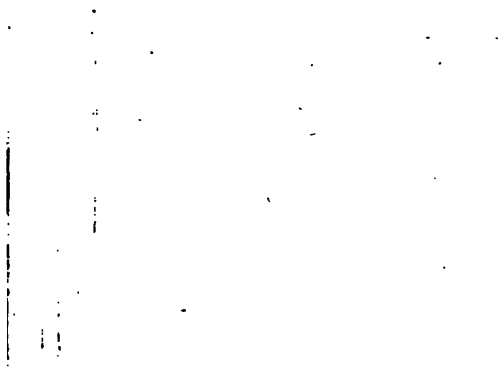
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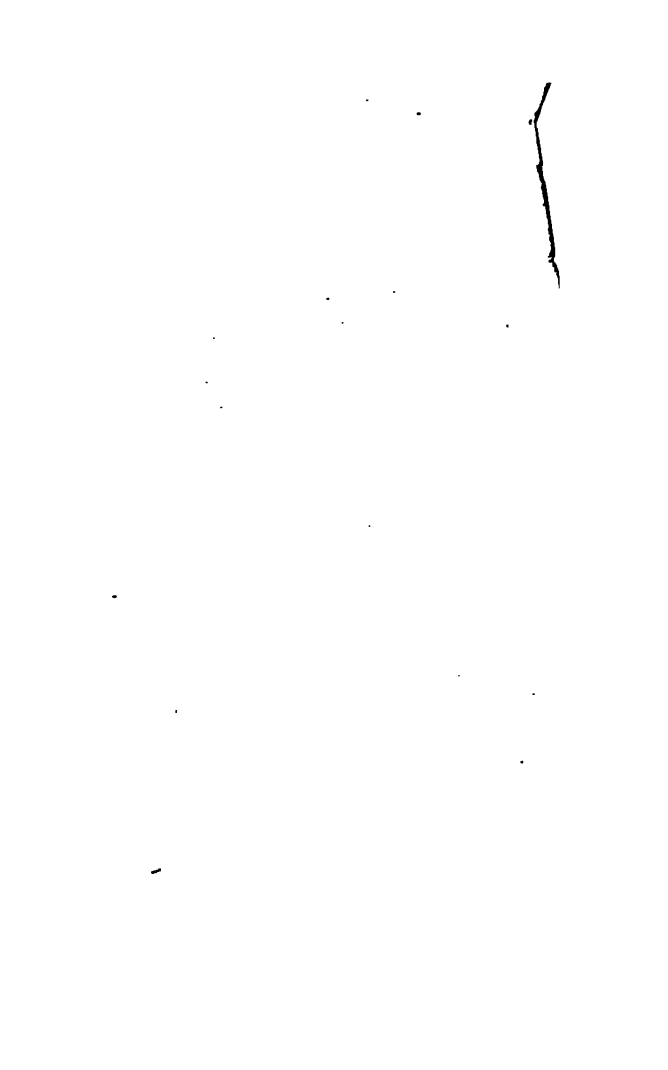
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